

LEADING WITH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: HOW CAMPUS LEADERSHIP SKILLS
IMPACT SCHOOL CULTURE

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Dissertation Approval

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Abstract

Successful leadership in the educational setting requires a unique and multifaceted skillset. It is a person-centric job with layered nuances which present challenges unique to the educational setting. The principal's responsibility to ensure positive outcomes and successful student achievement is beholden to creating and sustaining a safe environment and a culture conducive to learning. A myriad of leadership skills is required to accomplish this task. This qualitative phenomenological study identified the relationship between a positive school culture and the leadership skills of campus principals. This study explored the connection between teachers' perceptions of their principals' leadership skills and the campus culture. Further, this study suggested that the principal who exhibited skills related to the major components of emotional intelligence led a campus that teachers described as having a positive school culture. Additionally, this study examined the connection between principals' perceived leadership skills and the components of emotional intelligence.

Keywords: educational leadership, emotional intelligence, school culture

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Garrett M. Jackson

Date: May 2023

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my father, Dr. Paul N. Jackson. Dad, you have always been an inspiration to me. Your love, example, and forgiveness have kept me afloat.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction and Study Background

Leadership is a vastly studied topic that has amassed approximately 15,000 books in print and thousands of articles published yearly (Shinagel, 2013). Despite that, leadership is a problematic term to narrow down into a simple definition and requires a broader approach (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). To some individuals, leadership is a choice, an opportunity to impact a deeper purpose, and a labor of love and dedication to a more critical, bigger picture. To others, leadership is an opportunity to be in charge, levy authority and decision-making power, and ultimately be the boss (Hill, 2007). Various studies of leadership have resulted in numerous leadership models and theories (Hunt & Fedynich, 2019; Wilson et al., 2020), levels of leadership (Maxwell, 2016), and leadership styles (Khan et al., 2016) that are all applicable across many settings.

Educational leadership has a rich history but has only become the subject of more intense focus of contemporary research over the last 60 years. Therefore, this is true even more so in the previous two decades with the increased focus on school accountability at the national, state, and local levels (Firestone & Riehl, 2005). This era of accountability, ushered in by the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB), is a reality for school leaders that will not likely subside anytime soon. Since then, educational reform, driven by political ramifications, statewide performance indicators have been anchored in student proficiency measured by standardized tests, student attendance, discipline, and graduation rates (Johnstone et al., 2009). Although Ronald Edmonds coined the term instructional leader in the 1970s, building principals still engage in learning to lead instruction while managing a building rather than managing both (DeWitt, 2021).

The increased attention paid to the art of school leadership has highlighted specific qualities required by individuals to lead schools and school districts. No matter how much work goes into continuous improvement efforts related to accountability and student achievement, the school must still have ongoing management to keep things running. A myriad of research focused on this multifaceted role highlights the requirements individuals must master, such as teaching and learning, school management (including finance, safety, and policy implementation), and the social and emotional aspect of leading a building of staff and students along with a community. In summary, the areas of expertise that school leaders need to succeed are instruction, people, and organization (Grissom et al., 2021). This study focused on the importance of the principal's emotional intelligence in working with people to develop positive school culture.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers are leaving the profession at startling rates (Cineas, 2022). The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that more than 300,000 teachers left the profession between February 2020 and May 2022, a 3% drop in the workforce (Dill, 2022). A February 2022 survey by the National Education Association (NEA) found that 55% of teachers revealed they would make a career change sooner than planned, up from 37% in August 2021 (Walker, 2022). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2022) stated that 44% of public schools would have teacher vacancies at the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year. Further, NCES reported that The U.S. Department of Education survey results published in June of 2022 revealed that the average school in the U.S. has three teacher positions open. That same survey found that 62% of public schools are concerned about their ability to fill vacant positions, and 88% reported that teacher and staff burnout is a concern (2022). NEA President, Becky Pringle, described the national

teacher shortage as a five-alarm crisis (2022). The lack of qualified teachers results in harm that will go beyond students and devastate the public education system. The inability to establish a solid professional reputation will lead to even more difficulty recruiting and retaining teachers, thus, perpetuating the problem further (Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

Several factors are linked to the causes of the teacher shortage. The worldwide COVID-19 pandemic resulted in fears related to health and safety but also required teachers to adapt and work differently to adjust to remote learning. However, low pay, costly benefits, and statewide political debates also impact teachers (Lopez, 2022). To combat the teacher shortage, many researchers point out that improving relationships between teachers and administrators is necessary (Hughes et al., 2015; Olsen & Huang, 2019; Seariac, 2022; Shaw & Newton, 2014). Recent research has established the relationship between job satisfaction and the school principal's perceived emotional intelligence (Lingenfelter, 2015; Merida-Lopez et al., 2020; Swift, 2018). Therefore, this research study addressed the problem by identifying a potential connection between the campus leader's emotional intelligence and the perceived school culture.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

This research clarified the relationship between principal emotional intelligence and the school's culture. A school's culture is identified as one of the most important indicators of student success (Alam & Ahmad, 2018; Norman, 2019; Ricci, 2013). In addition, school culture has been identified as one of the driving forces in teacher recruitment and retention (Barkley et al., 2014; Lewis et al., 2016; Springer et al., 2011). Understanding these issues for improving educational leadership through emotional intelligence is essential to this knowledge. This study aimed to examine teachers' perceptions of their leader's emotional intelligence and the campus culture to determine an association.

Researching the relationships between emotional intelligence and successful school leadership adds to relevant factors such as the national teacher shortage, social-emotional learning, and overall student achievement. The study focused on one large district to evaluate whether there is or is not a connection between a campus leader's emotional intelligence and the overall culture of the campus. The need for more information or further research regarding the importance of emotional intelligence for school leaders may be determined by this study. This investigation will allow for future studies regarding implications for teacher recruitment, teacher retention, student achievement, and interpersonal relationships with students and parents related to the emotional intelligence of the school leader. Further, this exploration may lead to the development of best practices regarding hiring, training, and ongoing support of campus leaders in public education.

Theoretical Foundation

Chemers (1997) defined leadership as "the process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task" (p.1). The culmination of actions and behaviors based on theories related to a person's social and emotional impact on another form is the basis for leadership. Modern authors such as Simon Sinek, Susan Scott, and Michael Fullan have dedicated efforts to define, refine, and enhance the art of leadership and have based their work on leadership's relational and social aspects. Various leadership styles, behavior, and principles theories are rooted in foundational elements of relational understanding and personal and situational awareness (Amanchukwu et al., 2015).

Vygotsky developed the sociocultural theory of learning in 1934, which viewed human development as a socially mediated process and established that social interaction is a fundamental part of the development of cognition (McLeod, 2020). Within this theory, the zone

of proximal development, where a child can learn with assistance, is situated between what a child cannot do and what they can do on their own. The suggestion that learning is a social process provides the foundational idea that human relationships and behavior influence the beliefs, actions, and decisions of others (Cherry, 2022). This theory offered a pathway for further development of leadership's social-emotional aspects and implications (Mesquita, 2012).

Building on the sociocultural approach, Getzels and Guba (1957) developed the social systems theory that outlined the principal's role as influenced by the individual (idiographic) and nomothetic (institutional) dimensions of the organization. This work defined the importance of a principal understanding the expectations of their role and being aware of their personalities and dispositions. Congruence in an organization produces interdependence between individual members and the larger organization, which leads to growth and productivity as an organization. This theory's ultimate challenge is to address personal and organizational needs while achieving congruence (Ubben et al., 2017).

Hall's (1986) theory of the phases of consciousness is tightly related to Getzel and Guba's work. These four phases, presented as a linear progression, require an administrator to possess the following skills to operate at a particular level of consciousness before moving to the next level: gained perspective, perception of functioning, and the satisfaction of fulfilling needs. At the pinnacle of phase four, the leader demonstrates a strong transformational urge to make a difference in education and the lives of others.

Kouzes and Posner (2006) developed the exemplary leadership model. Five behaviors highlight a leader's best in this model: "model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart" (p. 13). They opined that exemplary leadership starts with the leader through self-awareness and modeling self-management. Through

persuasion and keen social awareness, the leader inspires others to support the vision and purpose of the organization while challenging the status quo, fostering growth and strength, and celebrating individuals for their accomplishments.

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), an established yet resurgent trend in primary and secondary education, highlights the importance of taking ownership of personal health and well-being, developing healthy social relationships, and self-regulation (Elias, 2003; Hymel et al., 2017; Petrelli 2021). These skills are not unrelated to what teachers and school leaders need at a professional level. School leaders must also develop social competencies to succeed (Cherniss, 1998).

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning is repeatedly affirmed through these various supporting studies and extended as applicable to leadership. A leader's aptitude for emotional intelligence is directly related to their success through social interactions and influence on their followers (Goleman, 2000). Emotions are essential skills and an integral part of intelligence that can lead to successful leadership (Orbeta & Bonhomme, 2019).

Research Questions

The principal's role has become more complicated with time and has expanded from daily operations managers to instructional leaders responsible for student growth and achievement (Skaalvik, 2018). As more Millennials and Generation Zers enter the workforce, the principal must keep up with the needs of young, evolving individuals while balancing the needs of the Baby Boomers and Gen Xers aging out of the profession (Waldman, 2021). Further, principals are faced with challenges in leading inclusive schools while meeting the educational needs of all students (DeMatthews et al., 2021). These challenges, along with the current difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff, current social justice issues, and the politicized educational

landscape, undoubtedly require an advanced understanding of interpersonal communication and relationship management (UNESCO, 2021).

A relatively new concept originating with Peter Solavoy and John Mayer in 1990, the term emotional intelligence grew in popularity as it was further researched and developed by psychologist Daniel Goleman in 1995. Goleman (2004) said, "The most effective leaders are all alike in one crucial way: They all have a high degree of what has become known as emotional intelligence" (p. 3). The research questions guiding this study were:

Research question #1: How are teachers' perceptions of their school administrator's leadership performance aligned with their perceptions of the school's culture?

Research question #2: In what ways are teachers' perceptions of the campus principal's leadership behavior aligned with components of emotional intelligence?

Rationale for the Study

Public education requires collaboration, interdependence, and positive interpersonal relationships to foster a school environment conducive to learning (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015).

According to the Council for Children's Rights, positive school environments promote student academic and emotional growth and teacher retention (2019). Districts will be equipped with research from this study that explored the connection between leading with emotional intelligence and positive school culture, which is linked to student success and teacher retention.

Researcher Positionality Statement

A personal interest in this topic originated from 18 years of experience as a classroom teacher, mid-level manager, and district-level administrator responsible for a large department of professional staff that works directly and indirectly with students. Interactions with various individuals through challenging situations with students, parents, and other staff led to an interest

in emotional intelligence and the impact on leadership through decisions, relationships, and department and district management. The importance of high emotional intelligence and its relevance to educational leadership brought about this topic of study. The current trends in educator retention solidified further reinforcement of the interest. Thus, being responsible for a department of nearly 400 professionals, the researcher is challenged with the task of employee retention and recruitment. Understanding the connection between emotional intelligence and successful educational leadership will help inform best practices for supporting and supervising teachers and other educational professionals.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

Limitations within a research study are defined as elements that arise in a study that are outside the researcher's control (Simon & Goes, 2013). The limitations of this study included additional factors unrelated to a campus administrator's emotional intelligence that can impact a school's culture. Since the campus leader is not the sole influencer of school culture, readers should interpret school culture scores cautiously while identifying potential connections with a principal's emotional intelligence. Current issues related to staffing shortages, the current political climate, and the reverberating effects of COVID-19 should be considered as potential influencers outside the school administration's control. Another limitation was the study's period of time, which inhibits the ability to consider varying times of the year as a potential factor related to school culture.

Delimitations within a research study, as defined by Simon & Goes (2013), are "those characteristics that arise from limitations in the scope of the study (defining the boundaries) and by the conscious exclusionary and inclusionary decisions made during the development of the study plan" (p.3). A delimitation of this study was the decision to include campuses from one

school district. The study was implemented in a suburban school district in the Southwestern United States, limiting the geographic area. As a result, survey responses and interviews were limited by the points of view of the respondents, who may have a limited understanding or perception of public schools in other parts of the country.

According to the William F. Ekstrom Library at the University of Louisville (2022), assumptions in research are unexamined beliefs included in the study that is considered accurate. The assumptions in this study culminated with the belief that positive interactions between students, parents, and campus staff generally contribute to positive school culture. In addition, this study assumed that staff and administrators were motivated to create and maintain a positive school culture.

Definition of Terms

The following key terms were essential in understanding the framework and scope of this study.

- **Climate** – is the shared perceptions of employee experiences related to observed acceptable behavior (Schneider et al., 2012, p. 362).
- **Culture** – is the shared values and beliefs that characterize a setting (Schneider et al., 2012, p. 362).
- **Educational Leadership** – is associated with formal organizational positions in school systems; it typically refers to campus principals, assistant principals, or other district administrators (Southworth, 2017).
- **Emotional Intelligence (EI)** - "refers to the ability to perceive, control, and evaluate emotions" (Cherry, 2022, p.1).

- **Instructional Leader** –a campus principal or other school administrator prioritizes instructional quality by being involved in goal setting, allocating resources, managing curriculum, monitoring lesson plans, and evaluating teacher performance (Jenkins, 2009).
- **Leadership** – is "a process of social influence which maximizes the efforts of others towards the achievement of a goal" (Kruse, 2013, p.11).
- **School Climate** - refers to the attitude of the stakeholders within a school; a fluid perception of the school that changes with circumstances; how individuals feel about the school (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015).
- **School Culture** - the personality of the stakeholders within a school as a whole; based on values, beliefs, and collective commitments, not on feeling (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015).
- **Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System (T-PESS)** - the State of Texas' principal evaluation model that consists of leadership standards measured by a rubric to promote continual growth and development (Texas Education Agency, 2022).

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One outlines the introduction and background of the study, which includes the statement of the problem, the study's purpose, significance, the framework related to the Sociocultural Theory of Learning, the research question, rationale, positionality statement, limitations and delimitations, and definition of terms. Chapter Two provides an extensive review of literature related to leadership styles, educational leadership, school climate and culture, emotional intelligence, and the connection of the Sociocultural Theory of Learning to the research. Chapter Three outlines the research methodology, which includes the approach to the research, the selection, and overview of study participants, data collection and analysis, and the ethical considerations of the study. Chapter

Four includes the presentation of findings, and Chapter Five summarizes the conclusions, implications, and recommendations.

Summary

Principal leadership is a critical component of school success. Principals impact many areas directly related to student success, community involvement, and teacher recruitment and retention (Baptiste, 2019). Given the challenges being faced by school districts nationwide, finding ways to combat the challenges with impactful leadership is an important task. School districts that better understand how the campus leader can directly impact school culture, leading to improved retention and student achievement, will be better equipped to hire and train influential leaders. This study examined a campus principal's impact on the school culture by exploring and connecting the Sociocultural Theory of Learning and the concept of emotional intelligence.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Chapter Two reviews and analyzes the literature related to the research topic. Within this chapter is an overview of the research associated with the historical perspectives and origins of leadership, the evolution of educational leadership and its challenges throughout the history of public education, and the foundational elements of emotional intelligence through the lens of Piaget's Constructivist Learning Theory and Vygotsky's Social Learning Theory.

Organization of the Literature Review

This literature review is organized into 11 main sections, which provide a broad introduction and definition of leadership, an overview of the leading theories of leadership, leadership styles, the intersection and application of leadership in the educational environment, and the concepts of emotional intelligence. The culmination of the literature review will connect leadership theories, practices, and styles with the importance of the emotionality of leadership and the consideration of emotional intelligence as a factor of leadership across sectors.

The research for this review consisted of a broad approach focused on sources related to leadership, leadership throughout the history of public education, and emotional intelligence. Sources of information included various national and global educational associations, recent dissertations, journal articles, and related books. Searches were conducted using Google, the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) via EBSCO, and ProQuest Academic. Key terms used in the research included the following words and phrases: leadership, educational leadership, instructional leadership, challenges in educational leadership, leadership styles, emotional intelligence, emotional intelligence for school leaders, Constructivist Learning Theory, Social Learning Theory, history of public education, educator retention, school climate, and school culture. A majority of the research included sources from 2012 to the present.

However, historical information and perspectives were included to provide relevant background information.

Introduction: What is Leadership?

The concept of leadership dates back to Biblical times with figures like Moses, Noah, and Jesus. Baron (1999) stated that,

Time and again, Moses demonstrated leadership traits that are highly prized today.

Because we live in the information age, where 'facts' evolve daily and the global marketplace is constantly shifting beneath our feet, the skills Moses used to lead his people through the wilderness are extremely relevant: being flexible, thinking quickly, sustaining the confidence in your people in uncertain times, and creating rules that work for individuals from widely diverse backgrounds. (p.14)

Even so, the term leader is considered to have originated in the 1300s, well after Moses and other biblical leaders (Cox, 2011; King, 1990). According to Stogdill (1974), leadership dates only as far back as the late 1700s. Leadership is a complex term to define. According to Stogdill (1974), the number of definitions of leadership is likely to equal the number of people who have tried to define it. Historically, researchers debated leadership as simple as being born with abilities resulting in a natural propensity to lead others. However, modern theories suggest that possession of certain traits may assist with natural leadership, but there is no substitute for experiencing variables within situations for building leadership skills (Benmira & Agboola, 2021). For this study, *leadership* is defined as a process requiring social influence and in which a person can gain the support of others in accomplishing a common goal (Chemers, 1997). The culmination of actions and behaviors based on theories related to a person's social and emotional impact on another is the basis for leadership. Modern authors such as Simon Sinek, Susan Scott,

and Michael Fullan have dedicated efforts to define, refine, and enhance the art of leadership and have based their work on leadership's relational and social aspects. Even so, the leadership construct is driven by more than 66 theories, which can obstruct future research and drive the need for streamlined integration of current research (Mango, 2018).

Theories of Leadership

The expansive changes to leadership theories often coincide with the evolution of sociocultural, political, and economic changes (Squires, 2018). Among the literature on leadership are several foundational theories, which include but are not limited to the works of Carlyle (1840), Stogdill (1948), Likert (1950), and Burns (1978). Organizationally, these theories can be compartmentalized into three contemporary perspectives: leadership is a combination of traits or characteristics, leadership is a set of behaviors or skills, and leadership is a process or relationship (Amanchukwu et al., 2015). The literature varies in terms of identifying development timelines, the correlation between one or more leadership theories, and the designation of major or minor theories. Often redundant, the major and minor leadership theories duplicate many of the same conclusions and attribute modern research to the same foundational themes (Hunt et al., 2018; Khan et al., 2016; Johns & Moser, 2001; Squires, 2018). The evolution of leadership theory culminates in modern-day practices intertwined with leadership styles that are not singularly all-encompassing (Hunt & Fedynich, 2018).

Defining Leadership Using Traits-based Criteria

The study of leadership began with the research behind The Great Man Theory during the second industrial revolution. Following was the Trait Theory, considered by some modern researchers as an extension of the Great Man Theory (Hunt & Fedynich, 2018). These were the primary sources of leadership research in the 1840s through the mid-20th century and focused on

influential leaders' innate characteristics and personality traits (Benmira & Agboola, 2021). These theories are linked to Thomas Carlyle, a 19th-century historian, and Francis Galton, a sociologist, and psychologist. Carlyle and Galton suggested that leaders, most commonly associated with males, are born (and not made) with certain inherited traits that set them apart from others (Khan et al., 2016). Their research asserted that leaders could use their natural intelligence, wisdom, and charisma to levy influence over others (Silva, 2016). Several historical figures were used as typical examples to bolster this theory. Men like Caesar, Lincoln, and Bonaparte were believed to have been born with these natural characteristics of leadership (Benmira & Agboola, 2021). However, with little empirical evidence supporting these theories, they were considered isolated from external factors such as situations or circumstances that leaders face. They were dismissed because leaders are not predetermined (Hunt & Fedynich, 2018).

Soon after World War II, Ralph Stogdill introduced a new definition of leadership by stating that the activities of a group are influenced by an individual and are focused on goal setting and achievement (Silva, 2016). Stogdill's 1948 meta-analysis of 124 studies and surveys across 27 groups of factors identified common qualities of leaders but did not uncover a common list of traits (Henman, nd). His work launched a new era of leadership and characteristics research. This work provided a new lens to view leadership as a process requiring specific, actionable steps driven by thoughtful planning and execution and leadership qualities, characteristics, and skills (McCall, 1982). He further argued that leadership success is relevant to the challenges and demands a leader faces (Buchanan & Huczynski, 1985). Stogdill, however, did not dismiss leadership traits entirely. Instead, he opined that the traits must be relevant to the leader's work (Northouse, 2021).

Stogdill's work launched more trait theory studies that, according to Northouse (2013), add to the knowledge of leadership while also containing fundamental issues. Table 1 provides a timeline of trait theory studies beginning with Stogdill's work.

Table 1

Trait Theory Studies

Stogdill (1948)	Mann (1959)	Stogdill (1974)	Lord, DeVader, and Alliger (1986)	Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991)	Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader (2004)
Intelligence	Intelligence	Achievement	Intelligence	Drive	Cognitive Ability
Alertness	Masculinity	Persistence	Masculinity	Motivation	Extraversion
Insight	Adjustment	Insight	Dominance	Integrity	Conscientiousness
Responsibility	Dominance	Initiative		Confidence	Emotional Stability
Initiative	Extraversion	Self-confidence		Cognitive Ability	Openness
Persistence	Conservatism	Responsibility		Task Knowledge	Agreeableness
Self-confidence		Cooperativeness			Motivation
Sociability		Tolerance			Social Intelligence
		Influence			Self-monitoring
		Sociability			Emotional Intelligence
					Problem Solving

Note. Adapted by P. G. Northouse (2013) from The Bases of Social Power by J. R. P. French, Jr., & B. Raven (1962), in D. Cartwright (Ed.), *Group dynamics: Research and theory*.

Defining Leadership Based on Behaviors

Since the trait theory era began, different eras have built on that foundation and provided more research into leadership. The proceeding theories that were developed overlap in time with each other, thus making it somewhat difficult to position them relationally (Côté, 2017). The 1940s through the 1950s saw an evolution from trait theories centered on the argument that leaders are made, not born. The introduction of the behavioral leadership theory era brought about research that studied patterns in behavior to determine behavioral aptitudes which would define a successful leader (Benmira & Agboola, 2021).

A study conducted by Ohio State University in the 1940s produced the Leaders Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) to expand the research without conclusive results related to trait theories. The LBDQ evolved from approximately 1,800 statements that measured nine

dimensions of behavioral leadership. Once developed, the LBDQ was administered to various individuals with different backgrounds to find common leadership behaviors. The study's conclusion identified two common behavioral groups of people consistently connected to effective leadership. These two groups were task-oriented leaders and people-oriented leaders (Mulholland, 2019).

Task-oriented leadership is defined as the leader focusing on tasks that must be completed to achieve a specific performance standard or goal within an organization (Ruzgar, 2018; Hua, 2020; Fayyaz et al., 2014; Eli, 2022). The behaviors noted in task-oriented leadership are related to initiation, organization, clarification, and data gathering (Khuong & Hoang, 2015; Fayyaz et al., 2014). Research indicated connections between these identified leader behaviors and employee performance and goal achievement (Fayyaz et al., 2014).

Conversely, people-oriented leaders primarily focus on their people as individuals with needs and want. This approach involves the leader utilizing behaviors such as observing, listening, and coaching (Mulholland, 2019; Holloway, 2012). Without positive daily interactions with their employees, or the human side of their work, the other aspects of a leader's responsibilities will suffer (Cangemi et al., 2008). Guthrie (2021) stated that this focus on the well-being and development of the team members has advantages such as creating an inclusive atmosphere, improved insight into the department or organizational climate, and increased motivation. Guthrie also pointed out that this leadership approach can lead to a delay in decision-making and a blurred perception of necessary boundaries.

Additional research led by Likert (1958) at the University of Michigan identified the predominant behaviors of influential leaders. This work further supported the LBDQ findings and identified a third group of leaders that utilized a democratic approach to leadership. Also

known as a participative approach, it increases collaboration by introducing a shared decision-making approach (Mulholland, 2019; Karsten & Hendricks, 2017; Smolovic et al., 2016; Liggett, 2022). Increasing participative leadership distributes decision-making power in a shared arrangement that provides empowerment and joint ownership of an organization's goals and mission (Gastil, 1994; Bolden, 2011). Vroom and Yetton (1973) produced the concept of participative management, yielding greater involvement by subordinates in the problem-solving and decision-making process.

Defining Leadership as a Process

Process leadership consists of the following components: the leader, the followers, the context, and the consequences (Bright & Cortes, 2019). Process leadership suggests that leadership happens in the context of an event and depends on the interactions between leaders and followers. Thus, leadership can be observed as a process, can be learned, and is impacted by situations and circumstances. Rather than being restricted by innate traits or abilities, leadership potential is accessible to all and can be trained (Northouse, 2018; Kotter, 1990). In addition, viewing leadership as a process highlights that "leaders affect and are affected by their followers either positively or negatively" (Kotter, 2016, p.1).

The leadership process is complex and requires interaction and dynamic relationships built over time and focused on fulfilling the followers' needs. In return, the followers bestow compliance, recognition, and respect on the leader. Given this relationship, situational leadership is attributed to processes of leadership where context and circumstances drive the processes for which the group addresses any given steps toward a common goal (Bright & Cortes, 2019).

The leader-member exchange (LMX) theory by Graen and Uhl-Bein (1995) centers on consequences associated with the leadership process. It is based on the assumption that the

follower's traits, skills, and knowledge are apparent to the leader. LMX portrays leadership as a series of dyadic relationships that link a leader with various followers. The quality of these relationships is measured by a certain degree of trust, loyalty, support, respect, and obligation developed over time. These relationships either contribute to growth and progress or lack thereof (Erdogan & Bauer, 2015; Bright & Cortes, 2019; Babić, 2014).

According to Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), the research provided a link between a positive exchange between leaders and followers and a reduction in the lack of motivation and higher levels of commitment. Weiss (1978) established that building trust leads to an alignment of values between leaders and followers, which enhances the LMX and supports positive change in organizations. Process leadership relies on trust as part of a solid leader-follower relationship and is centered on respect for others, service to others, the establishment of community, honesty, and justice (Gerstner, 2003).

Leadership Theory in Practice: Interweaving Leadership Styles

Throughout the development and evolution of leadership theories, leadership styles were born within the context of leader behaviors. Various behaviors and principles are rooted in foundational elements of relational understanding and personal and situational awareness (Amanchukwu et al., 2015). Over time, consistent focus on various leadership styles remains a driving force for the growing list of resources available to leaders today. While educational leadership requires specific skills related to pedagogy, the additional leadership skills needed to lead a school and a community successfully are directly tied to basic leadership principles. Skills related to building community, empowerment, data analysis, visioning, collaboration, and encouragement are familiar to school leadership and leadership in the private sector. In the same

way, the study of leadership styles is applicable across both public and private sectors (Beyer, 2012; Ubben et al., 2017.)

Although Lewin's leadership styles originated in the 1930s, a significant contribution to understanding leadership traits, behaviors, and processes through leadership theories added to his work. Studying various leadership styles, consisting of emotional characteristics contributing to how leaders influence their followers, provides contemporary understanding and practical knowledge often used in educational leadership training programs (Schleicher, 2012). A myriad of studies and competing opinions are readily available regarding leadership styles. As demonstrated, not one type is necessarily more significant than the other. All have equal merit and an appropriate time and place for implementation. Ultimately, those who can draw from each style and adapt to the needs of their followers will be effective and successful leaders. Goleman et al. (2019) theorized that the best leaders are skilled in several leadership styles and know when to switch between types as circumstances dictate.

A leadership style is a supporting component of leadership theory and reflects providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people through explicit and implicit actions. Different leadership styles represent a balance of the use of authority by the leader with the freedom of subordinates related to decision-making, project management, and task completion (Clark, 2004). In the 1930s, psychologist Kurt Lewin developed his leadership framework, which was the foundation of much of the research that followed. Lewin's model consists of three basic leadership styles: authoritarian (autocratic), participative (democratic), and delegated (laissez-faire). Seven specific leadership styles were identified that accurately represent the actions, beliefs, and characteristics of the various ways influential leaders work as research and theories continue to grow and evolve. The most effective leaders are those with a skill set in identifying

which style to use in which scenario to produce the best results (Zaccaro & Horn, 2003). Since these styles vary in characteristics, practice, and implementation, it is critical for a leader to be well-versed and experienced in using the appropriate style, or even a combination of styles, at the proper time (Ubben et al., 2017).

Authoritarian Leadership

The authoritarian leader, also known as the autocratic leader, controls all decisions and relies very little on input from their team while asserting a strong authority and demanding compliance from them. Decisions are typically based solely on the leader's ideas and judgments and rarely inclusive of the knowledge or expertise of the followers. The positive effects of this leadership style include quick decision-making, establishing a transparent chain of command or oversight, and providing structure in situations where intense, directive leadership is needed (Wang & Guan, 2018). Further, this style allows the leader to relieve pressure and stress on team members by taking on the majority of decision-making. In contrast, this style also has its drawbacks, including damage to morale, the hindrance of creativity and outside-the-box thinking, and the development of a lack of followers' abilities (Cherry, 2020).

In a 2018 study, Wang and Guan considered the relationship between authoritarian leadership and employee performance, proposing that this leadership style would enhance employee performance. Their findings concluded that there is a positive relationship between the two. Still, contributing factors such as relationships, employee motivation, power distance (a measure developed by Dorfman and Howell in 1988), and employee performance played a significant role. This conclusion supported the idea that leaders are most effective when they employ all leadership styles and use them appropriately while not relying on one type in

isolation. Cherry outlined several considerations that must be in play to be successful while implementing an authoritarian leadership style:

1. It is critical to listen to team members. By listening with an open mind, one can help others understand that they are making an important contribution to the team's mission. While listening to individual team members may not ultimately result in a change, the validation of being heard can positively impact the morale and disposition of the team.
2. If the leader expects team members to follow the rules, policies, and procedures, those explicit expectations must be established and communicated.
3. The authoritarian leader must be reliable. The inability to demonstrate consistency can result in the loss of respect from the team. There must be follow-through and enforcement of the established rules, which will develop the reputation of reliability and trust with team members.
4. The leader must recognize the success of individuals and teams more so than pointing out mistakes or failures.

Doing so, according to Cherry, will result in a more favorable response to correction when the time comes (2020).

Democratic Leadership

The democratic style of leadership is also sometimes known as the participative style. It includes one or more employees in the decision-making process while maintaining final decision-making authority. Leaders use this style when they have a portion of the information, and the employees have the other parts. A skillful leader using this style recognizes the value of hiring knowledgeable and highly skilled staff to complement their knowledge and skills while gaining different perspectives and diversity of thought (Clark, 2004). Utilizing this style can

generate trust and promote positive morale amongst team members. Creativity is valued, and team members feel comfortable providing their input and ideas in this environment. Some negative aspects of this style include overdependence on employees' expertise and experience and a time-consuming collaboration that can stall disagreement and slower decision-making that may result in missed deadlines (Gastil, 1994).

Laissez-Faire Leadership

The Laissez-Faire Leader. The French term laissez-faire translates into "let it be" or "a letting alone" and signifies non-interference from people in positions of authority. Laissez-faire leaders trust and rely on their employees with a hands-off approach. There is little to no micromanagement, with minimal guidance or direction offered. Instead, these leaders allow their employees to rely on their creativity, experience, and resources to help them meet their goals (Western, 2020).

The importance of this style of leadership is evident. Employees with choice and decision-making power have a higher level of workplace satisfaction than those without (Pogue et al., 2013). Further positive aspects of this style include opportunities for employees to succeed and pride in their success. The atmosphere may be free from micromanagement and overbearing supervision, the development of new ideas through the freedom of creativity, and faster decision-making when not waiting on management to provide feedback or approval. Distinct disadvantages are also evident within this style. The hands-off approach can lead to a lack of role clarity as staff seeks to understand their expectations. In addition, some employees do not work well with this level of freedom and need a leader that can provide more guidance, support, and structure. This style can also lead to increased conflict and a lack of accountability with a seemingly absent leader (Wynn, 2019).

Transactional Leadership

James Burns' work in studying leadership demonstrated that transactional leadership is based on an overemphasized role of power that gains the cooperation of subordinates through a simple transaction. Payment is rendered upon the completion of the work. Therefore, there is very little connection, shared responsibility, or mutual goals or aspirations, only a high degree of management and accountability (Stewart, 2006). Mirroring the work of Garath Morgan's illustrative examples, this leadership style equates to an organization managed as a machine (Ubben et al., 2017).

Organizations led by transactional leaders are highly efficient, dedicated to tradition, consistent, and can be highly successful while supporting a narrow cause. These leaders are often seen in the military or large multinational corporations. Norman Schwarzkopf, a former United States Army general, was once quoted as saying, "When placed in command, take charge (para. 14)." His leadership style, along with other famous leaders like Vince Lombardi and Howard Schultz, aligned with the typical characteristics of transactional leaders: focused on short-term goals, favor given to structure and procedures, a celebrating efficiency, inflexible, and opposed to change ("What is Transactional," 2014). This type of leader attracts those motivated by self-interest, may require a highly structured environment for success, and prefer to work on and achieve short-term or a higher rate of intrinsic reward. However, a great deal of emphasis on strict policies and a structured environment comes at the expense of adaptation, innovation, creativity, and an exceedingly engaged and long-term committed workforce.

Transformational Leadership

Burns (1978) introduced transformational leadership in his research on political leaders. He established two concepts within this style: transforming leadership and transactional

leadership. Within these two concepts, leaders link success to collaboration, interdependence, and inspiration as power over achievements and goals while eliminating the perception of control over people and events (Ubben et al., 2017). The actions of a transformational leader deeply align with collaboration, connection with others, listening, and applying the positional power to control goals and outcomes rather than those he employs (Peterson, 2009).

Bass (1985) further developed Burns' work to include the psychological aspects of transformational and transactional leadership (Albritton, 1998). The Situational Leader. The Hersey-Blanchard model of situational leadership is sometimes referred to as the definitive leadership model and focuses on the attributes, styles, and readiness of the followers (Schermerhorn, 1997). This model comprises four specific leadership styles directly correlated to the skill demonstrated by the follower. Directing is the initial, or basic, phase of leadership style within this model and is used with staff who display a low level of competence and a high level of commitment. The leader uses a high level of directive behavior and a low level of supportive behavior. The next phase uses the coaching style paired with an employee who has low competence and a low level of commitment. In this phase, the leader uses high levels of directive and supportive behavior in response to the employee's needs. The supporting stage is linked to a staff member with moderate to increased competence and a variable level of commitment. A leader will demonstrate highly supportive and low directive behavior in this phase. Finally, the delegating stage is used when the employee demonstrates high competence and comment. Low supportive and directive behavior levels are needed when leading this person (Whitehead, 2016).

Servant Leadership

In servant leadership, the leader places a great deal of focus on serving their followers. They seek to demonstrate the qualities of listening, empathy, awareness, persuasion, and a deep

commitment to employee growth and success (Dolinh, 2014). The term "servant leader" was coined in 1970 by Robert Greenleaf, a retired AT&T executive. Greenleaf defined servant leadership as:

The servant-leader is a servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The best test is: do those helped to grow as persons: do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, more accessible, more autonomous, and more likely to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived? (Greenleaf & Spears, p. 27)

Since then, servant leadership has continued to increase in popularity and use across many sectors. Notably, the terms servant and leader are generally thought to contrast, highlighting this concept as an unusual approach to effective leadership, as it was once considered. In studying Greenleaf's work, Larry Spears concluded that ten interconnected characteristics of influential, caring leaders align closely with a servant leadership style. These characteristics include awareness, community-building, commitment to people's growth, conceptualization, empathy, foresight, healing, listening, persuasion, and stewardship (2010).

Listening is the first characteristic Spears highlighted, with an emphasis on a deep commitment to intently listen to others to pay attention to what is said and unsaid, and the importance of reserving time for reflection (2010). Further supporting this critical characteristic, Susan Scott addressed the importance of listening even in a heightened state of emotions when instincts suggest otherwise. She says, "It is not easy to stay in listening mode during an interaction with someone whose comments make you want to strangle him or her on the spot"

(2009, p. 51). Scott also reinforced listening to what is unsaid versus what is said. This action often provides important clues into what is happening behind the scenes (2009).

Spears focused on *empathy* as a characteristic that brings about a connection, high trust, and deeper rapport with employees. He elaborated that empathetic listening is a skill that the most successful leaders have developed (2020). Professor, author, and speaker Brené Brown often refers to empathy as a critical component of leadership. In her book *Dare to Lead*, she stated, "One of the signature mistakes with empathy is that we believe we can take our lenses off and look through the lenses of someone else" (Brown, 2018, p. 143).

Spears noted that relationships are hard and require *healing*. No matter the setting, situation, level of intelligence, or other circumstances, human interaction can, and inevitably will, lead to conflict and broken trust. Because of this, the skillful ability to heal relationships is a powerful leadership characteristic that successful leaders have (Spears, 2020). The practice of addressing concerns head-on can initiate the process of healing and making relationships whole again.

Spears offered that "general awareness, especially self-awareness, strengthens the servant-leader" (2010, p. 27). According to Daniel Goleman and Boyatzis (2017), emotional intelligence consists of four central skills: self-awareness and social awareness. Mitchel Adler (2014) defined *emotional intelligence* as the aptitude to make healthy choices based on correctly identifying, understanding, and managing personal feelings and those of others. In working with others, self-awareness of self and social awareness allows the leader to view situations from a more integrated and holistic viewpoint (Spears, 2020). Consequently, this allows for better understanding and more calculated responses on the part of the leader, who will ultimately be more connected to followers due to this trait.

Often considered a negative characteristic, *persuasion* is the servant style of convincing others rather than using positional power to coerce or demand compliance (Spears, 2020). This characteristic and skill are further strengthened by the ability to build consensus and recognize the group's will (DuFour et al., 2020). A leader's keen ability to foster collaboration and bring about agreement supports an organization's overall climate and culture. Further, the apparent connection that can be made from this characteristic to empathy, listening, and awareness strengthens Ubben et al.'s (2017) assertion that the ability to utilize more than one leadership style or character trait is a critical component of successful leadership.

Spears contended that *conceptualization* is one of the more challenging to master and requires a great deal of discipline and practice (2020). For servant leaders, stretching their thinking beyond the day-to-day operational thinking is critical. A leader who thinks conceptually can understand why something is being done. This abstract thinking, sometimes called design thinking, allows the leader to engage in decisions fully, lead change and innovation, and problem-solve when presented with a complex issue (Micheli et al., 2019).

A valid prediction based on circumstances and variables in a situation is called *foresight*. A situation's possible outcome relies on the servant leader's skill in drawing from past experiences and understanding the current realities (Spears, 2020). This skill is closely related to conceptualization and continues to develop through research.

Block (1993) defined *stewardship* as "holding something in trust for another" (p. 24). The Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards include resource management to determine how a determined and effective instructional leader must use resources appropriately. However, this concept also applies to information stewardship, which builds trust.

A *commitment to the growth of people* is the belief that people are the most critical asset to an organization and is the hallmark of a servant leader. In their book *Coaching for Breakthrough Success*, Canfield and Chee summarized that leaders who invest in the growth of people, in turn, grow themselves (2013). The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders outlines the importance of building school personnel's professional capacity and developing professional learning communities as an ongoing practice for continuous improvement (2015).

Finally, Spears added that the component of *building a sense of community* is critical to servant leader success (2010). Thus, it can be accomplished by developing and committing to a shared mission, vision, and beliefs on which all stakeholders will base their actions and decisions. The establishment of a community that is supportive of each other creates a dynamic work environment that is ideal for success.

Modern Adaptations to Leadership for the 21st Century

As leadership theory evolved, it is no surprise that current literature provides insight into modern leadership practices aligned with modern organizational behaviors and challenges. Schwartz et al. (2019) contended that the new challenges leaders face in the 21st century are related to the speed of technological, social, and economic change. In a 2019 study, the Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends survey found that many respondents indicate that today's organizations require updated leadership skills further developed beyond traditional leadership theory and style. In this survey, 81% of respondents shared that the ability to lead requires navigating complexity and ambiguity. Another 65% believed in leading through influence, 50% of respondents shared that leaders must be able to lead remotely, and 44% asserted leaders must lead at a faster pace. The same survey found that new technologies, fast-paced change, changing demographics, employee expectations, and consumer expectations all contribute to the need for

updated leadership skills. Research showed that it is not enough for leaders to update or further develop their existing skills; they must also introduce a new skill set to meet modern demands. Among these new skills are agility, transparency in action, greater anticipation of need, constant innovation, and attention to managing risk and quality of work (Schwartz et al., 2019).

Hayward and Newman (2014) highlighted the need for connected, emotionally intelligent leadership. They contend that specific steps related to creating a shared vision and purpose, building authentic relationships, distributing power, and collaborative achievement are critical for modern leaders. Others suggested that motivation, commitment, and consensus-building are also vital skills that must be developed by 21st-century leaders (Thomas, 2013; Felfe, 2009; Schneider, 2021).

A common theme in the literature showed that the concept of managing and leading being synonymous with each other is outdated. Instead, modern research defines managers and leaders differently and supports the alignment of modern leader behaviors versus outdated management behaviors that are no longer effective (Robinson, 2021). Duggal (2022) stated that management focuses on performance and results through planning, organizing, and controlling. Conversely, modern leadership is centered on people and is more concerned with influence than power (Nayar, 2013).

John Maxwell (2016) outlined the five leadership levels that comprehensively portray the leadership journey from power to influence, the common theme in current leadership practices. Maxwell's levels illustrated the relationship between a leader and his or her followers in stages. Firstly, people follow leaders because they have to due to the power congruent with the position. Next, people progress to following a leader because of established relationships. The third level suggested that people follow leaders due to their ability to elicit productivity and results.

Fourthly, leaders are followed because of their ability to develop others. The fifth and highest level, which Maxwell named pinnacle, is the most challenging to attain and requires leaders to develop other leaders and are followed for who they are and what they represent.

Historical Perspectives of Educational Leadership

Public education developed into a foundational institution in the United States after enduring inconsistent support in the country's infancy during the colonial settlement period. During this time, many youths were excluded from access to education due to ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and geography. White children made up the majority of a school's student body. They attended classrooms in various ways, such as home schools, boarding schools, schools supported by religious affiliation, and apprenticeships. The establishment of Federally funded public education started with ordinances passed in 1785, which entrusted land to states entering the union under the obligation to set aside portions of this land for public schools. These land grants established the importance of public education, as demonstrated by the founding fathers (Kober & Rentner, 2020).

By the 1830s, access to public schools for all children became a topic of advocacy. Under the belief that public schooling for all children would benefit the nation, public schools focused on developing students into contributing citizens. Horace Mann, the father of American education, believed in educational opportunities and that establishing unified school systems and a curriculum based on Christian values and principles would allow students to learn and make their judgments about morality. Under this everyday school movement, students were exposed to the Bible but not indoctrinated into any specific denomination (Lupu et al., 2019).

Public education became common in New England and was based purely on class. Great local control and oversight of schools drove the creation of curriculum and instructional

practices. Teachers were considered highly influential in students' lives and expected to model the highest moral standards. By the mid-1800s, most states widely accepted that the oversight of public schools included three basic principles: public education should be free and supported by taxpayers, teachers should be trained, and children should be required to attend school. As more attention was cast upon teacher preparation, the replication of the French *école normale*, or normal school, was established in the United States. Normal schools were created to develop model classrooms where teacher candidates would receive training. The United States founded the first public normal school in 1839 in Lexington, Massachusetts. By the 20th century, teacher preparation programs required four years of training rather than the traditional two years required by early normal schools (Paterson, 2021).

Throughout the transformation of public schools in the United States, the role of the principal was formed to provide oversight, guidance, and leadership to teachers and communities. Early school leadership comprised single teachers appointed by communities to lead the school's daily operations. Once schools grew from single-classroom buildings, the "principal teacher" role consisted of clerical and administrative duties to keep the school running. This small transformation ultimately brought about a more significant degree of authority, and the teaching responsibilities diminished as the role required more time and attention to the school's governance (Kafka, 2009).

Educational leadership has evolved to keep pace with the changing landscape of public education. The progression of the public education system and efforts to compete with the global education race has spurred increased oversight by federal and state governments through political and legal means. Efforts to improve education in the United States have resulted in a changing landscape of policies, procedures, and funding. With those changes have come shifts in the roles

of principals, superintendents, and other education leaders to meet the expectations of the federal and state governments and community expectations. The early 1990s brought about deeper accountability for American public schools, thus shifting administrators' focus toward improved teaching and learning practices, ongoing professional learning, and data-driven decision-making. These responsibilities changed the role of the campus principal to include becoming the lead learner on campus by engaging in professional development and drawing more attention to improving teaching and learning (Pugh, 2002).

The development of educator preparation programs in the United States resulted in standard teaching practices. These practices required oversight from year to year. Thus, educational leadership became vital in 20th-century public education. The early history of school leadership can be tied to three primary works by Callahan (1962), Tyack (1974), and Cuban (1988). These researchers provided the foundation for that formed educational leadership for the next generations of educators (Bogotch, 2011).

As the challenges of public education mount, educational leaders must respond to how these changes impact their staff's emotions, stress, and overall self-efficacy (Ernst, 2019). Educators' stress is linked to several factors, including test-based performance accountability, increasingly problematic relationships with parents and students, violence in the classroom, and workplace expectations that exceed the professional scope of knowledge (Farmer, 2020). In 2022, it was estimated by the National Education Association (NEA) that nearly 55 percent of educators are contemplating an early exit from the profession. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, educators working in public schools numbered 10.6 million in January 2020. As of February 2022, that number had fallen to 10 million, representing a loss of 600,000 educators in just two years (2022). These alarming statistics provide a strong case for a shift in the focus of

educational leadership to address the recruiting efforts and retention of teachers by focusing on the emotional role of the school principal (Buskila & Levi, 2021).

The Role of the Educational Leader

John Dewey said, "If we teach today's students as we taught yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow" (Ubben et al., 2017, p. 128). Educational leadership and decision-making are a never-ending process that impacts students daily. While effective educational leadership comes with a vast collection of responsibilities, students' success is the ultimate gauge of accomplishment. There are many considerations for the school leader: impacting a positive school culture and climate, collaboration and interdependence, and the operation under a shared mission, vision, and values. Along the way, leaders will face challenges and must draw on resilience, practical leadership skills, and the dedication of various stakeholders to ensure high levels of achievement and continual improvement. All while balancing stakeholders' multiple needs and expectations, including district expectations set forth by the school board and superintendent. Ubben et al. (2017) posed several case studies in *The Principal* that highlight the various layers of responsibility a school leader encounters. Two of the most dynamic and influential responsibilities they identified were curriculum and budget.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) (2022) designed the Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System (TPESS) to meet the federal government's standards. These standards provide insight into the essential responsibilities of the campus principal, such as instructional leadership, human capital, executive leadership, school culture, and strategic operations. Instructional leadership requires a principal to ensure that all students receive high-quality instruction. The priority for an instructional leader is student achievement through rigorous curriculum, effective instructional strategies, data-driven instruction and intervention, and maximizing learning for all

students. These priorities create the need for the campus principal to model instructional strategies and dedicate time to visit classrooms. In addition, attending joint planning meetings affords an opportunity to provide feedback provided to teachers that contributes to the ongoing learning of the campus staff. Schools led by effective principals demonstrate the use of data, standard interim assessment cycles, and collaborative practices. Human capital refers to the principal's responsibility to hire, develop, and retain high-quality teachers and staff. Principals must treat staff members as the most valuable asset on the campus and commit to effective practices in coaching and supervision while maintaining high expectations of learning and continuous improvement. Executive leadership requires the principal to take personal responsibility for the school's success through a committed quest for excellence. A successful executive leader sustains resiliency, commits to ongoing personal and professional growth, communicates effectively, and demonstrates the highest ethical behavior. The principal's responsibility related to the school culture includes establishing and implementing a shared vision and a culture that promotes high expectations for all. Intentional family and community engagement, creating a safe school environment, and discipline strategies that meet the needs of individual students impact the campus culture. The principal is responsible for assessing the school's needs and establishing the priorities supported by goals, targets, and strategies to impact teacher effectiveness continually. Strategic planning, maximizing and protecting learning time, resource management, and policy implementation are all components of successful strategic operations (TEA, 2022).

Challenges in Educational Leadership

Educational leaders face many challenges daily in addition to the complexity of the role related to essential responsibilities. LearningForward (2019) surveyed school leaders who

consistently articulated that they faced challenges with time, discipline, mental health, budget, equity, trauma, and social-emotional learning. Pairing those challenges with a global pandemic and an unstable political climate makes the principal's role seem impossible. In an already complex and challenging role that includes making a multitude of critical decisions daily, school leaders must balance school safety, climate and culture, and recruitment and retention with the ultimate responsibility of student learning on their shoulders (Bushweller & Prothero, 2021; Paterson, 2018; Day et al., 2016).

Decision Making

School leaders make daily decisions impacting students, parents, staff, and the school and district. Decision-making is considered one of the most critical activities in which a school administrator participates (Lunenburg, 2010). Generally, the decision-making process is broken down into several steps depending on the context, application, and industry. In addition, some decision-making models consider how the decision will be made; in isolation, with participation and input, through collaboration, or with a laissez-faire approach (Martin et al., 2021).

One component of educational decision-making that can be rather intimidating is the legal implications some decisions may produce. School administrators must be aware of the rights of individuals, school law, and local policies and procedures to support a finding that can be defensible (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2022). Decisions made by an administrator can impact behaviors, the culture and climate of the school, and the continuous improvement process, which can all lead to positive or negative consequences regarding student achievement (Branch et al., 2013).

Pandemic Leadership

Leading schools through a global pandemic created unique challenges that campus administrators had never encountered. Aside from working to continue to sustain learning for students during a global shutdown and the closure of schools, the lasting impact of the pandemic is still influencing the daily work of the campus leader. The pandemic also raised concerns about inequalities in the educational system worldwide, as not all students have internet access or online resources that would aid in learning through school closures (Bryant et al., 2022). UNESCO estimated that school closures impacted nearly 850 million students, with most relying on remote learning to continue their education (2020). Nearly two-thirds of the world's student population is without access to the internet, and nearly 600 million students faced the pandemic with no access to remote learning options (UNICEF, 2020).

The global shutdown of schools did not only result in immediate challenges for schools and school leaders. The lasting effects of learning loss prompted many states to enact requirements for local school districts to respond by mandating additional opportunities for students to access their teachers (Office for Civil Rights, 2021). Unfortunately, some state responses proved challenging to implement locally and placed additional pressure on teachers and school administrators. The 87th Texas legislature passed House Bill 4545, which mandated the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to direct schools to provide accelerated instruction to students based on individual achievement results (TEA, 2022). TEA established commissioner's rules that directed the establishment of Accelerated Learning Committees (ALCs) to develop individualized student plans in response to learning loss. TEA also dictated that students who failed subject area standardized tests would be required to be provided no less than 30 hours of targeted instruction during the summer or the subsequent school year (TEA, 2021). As a result,

campus leaders were forced to retool master schedules, attempt to hire teachers to work during the summer, and provide oversight and data collection to report compliance to the state. Thus, districts reported that HB 4545 created more challenges than solutions, resulting in scheduling and staffing challenges (Sikes & Piñón, 2022).

Throughout the pandemic response to learning challenges, campus, and district leaders have faced increased stress and burnout with current teachers on top of an increasingly difficult task of hiring and retaining staff. Many teachers point to the disrespect for educators posed by parents during and after the pandemic (Gaudiano, 2022). Administrators have since been faced with recruiting highly qualified educators and balancing their workloads and stress levels to retain them; all the while, districts are challenged in the same way regarding school administrators (Superville, 2022).

School Accountability

Aside from the challenges of the pandemic, the impact of federal and state mandates on teachers has steadily increased. These expanding requirements and accountability measures contribute to educator stress and burnout. As a result, the present-day campus principal's role has shifted to include ways to renew and sustain the passion and desire for educators to remain in the profession. To best understand and respond to the needs of their staff, successful principals have learned to demonstrate compassion and deep care to cultivate and sustain passion, commitment, and ongoing improvement to meet the needs of educators and students on campuses across the country (Cherkowski, 2012).

Legal developments have directly impacted leadership in public education over the last two decades. The *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) was the primary law driving educational practice between 2002 and 2015. It produced a system of strict accountability and penalties for

schools that did not show improvement over time. The *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) of 2015 replaced NCLB and placed more responsibility on states to measure student performance in reading, math, and science. In addition, ESSA required each state to develop a "State Report Card" that is accessible online and provides the community with information on testing performance, graduation rates, suspensions, absenteeism, teacher qualifications, and other areas. Overall, ESSA increased transparency and provided information to parents to make informed decisions. This transparency includes financial reports on per-pupil expenditures and identifying the lowest-performing schools that require comprehensive support and improvement by the state government (Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020).

Responsive Schools

The principal is also challenged to ensure educational practices are focused on the whole child (Delisio, 2011). Responsive schools refer to an educational environment dedicated to identifying and responding to the needs of individual students in the areas of social, emotional, and cultural learning (Center for Responsive Schools, 2022; NASSP, 2019). In responsive classrooms, an emphasis is placed on empathy and respect for the various life experiences of both educators and students. In the wake of the shifting cultural dynamics, demographics, and many challenges faced by students and staff alike, a responsive school can serve as the conduit between experiencing life and learning about it and how to respond to it (Center for Responsive Schools, 2022).

Research suggests that children's experiences affect their social, emotional, and behavioral development (Dawson et al., 2000; Malik & Marwaha, 2018; Steele et al., 1999). Childhood and adolescence are key stages in life and are crucial to the development of a positive self-perception and strong adaptive behavioral skills (Pfeifer & Berkman, 2018). Early

intervention for students' social, emotional, and behavioral development may lessen the need for long-term services and support (Yoshikawa et al., 2013; Bierman et al., 2018). School climate and culture play a significant role in developing a school environment responsive to students' needs beyond academic achievement. The teacher is representative of one of the most important individuals who can influence a student's personality and self-esteem (Santi & Gorghiu, 2016). While at school, students develop beliefs, feelings, and behaviors about themselves that reflect the environment around them. While teaching and learning are multidimensional, there is evidence to show that campus leaders and teachers play a substantial role in how students perceive themselves regarding their academic achievements and beyond (Agir, 2019; Brooks, 20220; Villaseñior, 2017)

The responsive school principal provides leadership by establishing methods and practices and setting expectations for responsive practices to be implemented (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2016). The focus on equity as a driving force provides an individualized understanding of the needs of each student. Responsive schools bring into focus these needs that rise above and beyond just academics and provide the appropriate interventions and programs to meet these needs. Research showed that various programs within schools targeting the emotional and social needs of students lead to a decrease in maladaptive behaviors and indicators of mental illness while improving academic achievement and self-regulation skills (Fraser et al., 2014; Wong et al., 2014; Zhai et al., 2015).

Theoretical Framework

Grounded in Piaget's Constructivism Learning Theory is Vygotsky's 1934 Sociocultural Theory of Learning which views human development as a socially mediated process and establishes that social interaction is a fundamental part of the development of cognition

(McLeod, 2020). Within this theory, the zone of proximal development, where a child can learn with assistance, is situated between what a child cannot do and what they can do on their own. The suggestion that learning is primarily a social process provides the foundational idea that human relationships and behavior influence the beliefs, actions, and decisions of others (Cherry, 2022). This theory undoubtedly offered a pathway for further development of leadership's social-emotional aspects and implications (Mesquita, 2012).

Building on the sociocultural theory, Getzels and Guba (1957) developed the social systems theory that outlined the principal's role as influenced by the individual (idiographic) and nomothetic (institutional) dimensions of the organization. This work defined the importance of a principal understanding the expectations of their role and being aware of their personalities and dispositions. Congruence in an organization produces interdependence between individual members and the larger organization, which leads to growth and productivity as an organization. This theory's ultimate challenge is to address personal and organizational needs while achieving congruence (Ubben et al., 2017).

Hall's (1986) theory of the phases of consciousness is tightly related to Getzel and Guba's work. These four phases, presented as a linear progression, require an administrator to possess the following skills to operate at a particular level of consciousness before moving to the next level: gained perspective, perception of functioning, and the satisfaction of filling needs. At the pinnacle of phase four, the leader demonstrates a strong transformational urge to make a difference in education and the lives of others.

Kouzes and Posner (2006) developed the exemplary leadership model. Five behaviors highlight a leader's best in this model: "model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart" (p. 13). They write that exemplary

leadership starts with the leader through self-awareness and modeling self-management. Through persuasion and keen social awareness, the leader inspires others to support the vision and purpose of the organization while challenging the status quo, fostering growth and strength, and celebrating individuals for their accomplishments.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning is repeatedly affirmed through these various supporting studies and extended as applicable to leadership. A leader's aptitude for emotional intelligence is directly related to their success through social interactions and influence on their followers (Goleman, 2000). Emotions are essential skills and an integral part of intelligence that can lead to successful leadership (Orbeta & Bonhomme, 2019).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study included the foundational elements of Goleman's emotional intelligence and his emotional intelligence competencies (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). This framework confirms emotional intelligence in individuals since they utilize related abilities in self-awareness, self-regulation, internal motivation, empathy, and social skills (Thakran & Kumar, 2015).

The construct of emotional intelligence (EI) was highly influenced by the work of Howard Gardner and his research on multiple intelligences (Bay & Lim, 2006). Payne (1985) pioneered the specific study of EI with a focus on fear, pain, and desire. In 1990, John Mayer and Peter Salovey added to the subject by creating a scientific method to measure differences between individuals from an abilities point of view (Panait & Buscinschi, 2018). It wasn't until the mid-1990s that emotional intelligence gained popularity with Daniel Goleman's work (1995). Goleman expanded Mayer and Salovey's work and published his bestselling book *Emotional Intelligence*. Since then, EI has been a popular topic of debate among researchers, with the

definitions, applications, and theories varying among researchers. The primary difference of opinion is generated through the various published EI models and conclusions regarding the foundational beliefs that it is an ability-based model versus a mixed model measuring traits and or more diverse competencies (McLellan et al., 2017).

Literature suggests that Salovey and Mayer primarily support ability-based models (O'Connor et al., 2019; Mayer et al., 2016; Ackerman & Kanfer, 2004; Brackett et al., 2006; Conzelmann et al., 2013). These models describe EI as a form of social intelligence (SI) that involves the ability to monitor oneself and others' feelings and emotions, differentiate among them and use the information to guide one's thinking and action. The range of EI includes

- the verbal and nonverbal evaluation and expression of emotion,
- the regulation of feelings in the self and others, and
- the utilization of emotional content in problem-solving (O'Connor et al., 2019).

Goleman's mixed models integrate emotional and rational components of intelligence and personality, resulting in the contention that ability-based models are incomplete or lacking in depth. The mixed-model definition of EI combines emotional and social intelligence rather than differentiating between them (Walter et al., 2011). Bar-On (2007) explained that "People who are emotionally and socially intelligent can understand and express themselves, understand and relate well to others, and successfully cope with the demands of life. Furthermore, they need to manage emotions and be sufficiently optimistic, positive, and self-motivated" (p. 2-3).

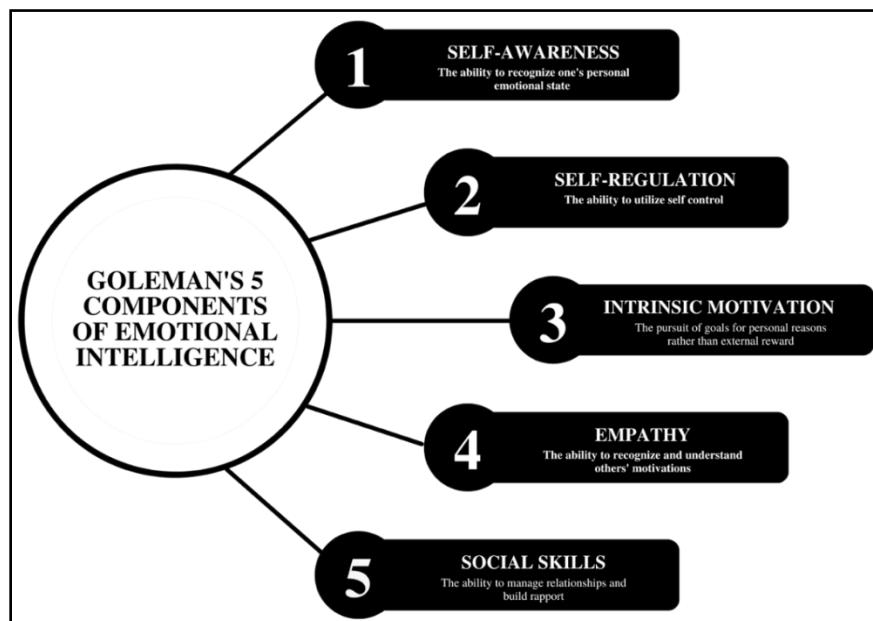
Goleman's work is considered the most influential and provides a model focusing on emotional intelligence as a set of competencies and skills that heavily influence leadership performance. The *Goleman Emotional Intelligence Quadrant*, which outlines domains and competencies, includes self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship

management (Craig, 2019). Additional research outlined five major components or skills of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 1995; Cherry, 2022; Morgan, 2021).

Self-awareness is defined as when one knows his emotions, strengths, and weaknesses and recognizes their impact on others while using intuition to guide decisions. An individual with self-regulation skills manages their own disruptive emotions and impulses and adapts to changing circumstances. The self-motivation implies motivating oneself through a commitment to achieve achievement. Empathy is recognizing, understanding, and considering other people's feelings, especially when making decisions. Lastly, the social skills cluster relates to managing others' emotions to move people in the desired direction through leadership, communication, and influence (Goleman, 1995). Based on these clusters, Goleman defined emotional intelligence as the ability to understand and control our own emotions, the emotions of others, and that of groups.

Figure 1

Goleman's Emotional Intelligence



Note. Goleman's Five Components of Emotional Intelligence

Despite there being a multitude of studies and EI models, there is a common approach that suggests these foundational elements are essential in understanding and improving one's EI skills. Generally, most researchers and scholars agree that the process begins with intrapersonal emotional knowledge and ends with adequate interpersonal dynamic conceptualization and application (Panait & Bucinschi, 2018).

Emotional Leadership

Understanding emotional intelligence is important, especially in the field of leadership. Panait and Bucinschi (2018) studied this concept and its relevance and impact on military leadership development. They found it a major factor in managing human interactions and a significant part of leadership. Specifically, leaders with high emotional intelligence were more likely to make better decisions, engage and influence more effectively, and create the right conditions for tasks to be completed. Ultimately, they found that 48% to 80% of what differentiates leaders' performance can be attached to emotional intelligence (2018).

Recently, more research has been conducted between emotional intelligence and leadership. However, the most vital connection still occurs between the emotionality of leadership, specifically transformational leadership (McLellan et al., 2017). Walter et al. (2011) conducted extensive research and reported the relevance of emotional intelligence to different aspects of leadership. They categorized the existing research into leadership emergence, behavior, and effectiveness.

Leadership emergence portrays the common scenario in which an individual is not in a formal position of defined authority but represents the degree to which that person is perceived as a leader and influences others. This concept precedes any position of power or authority and

highlights the natural and intentional leadership portrayed by individuals who influence their peers in a positive way. Although little research has examined the link between emotional intelligence and leadership emergence, the "existing evidence has provided a rather consistent picture. In fact, all published articles support the notion that emotionally intelligent individuals are more likely to emerge as leaders" (Walter et al., 2011, p.48).

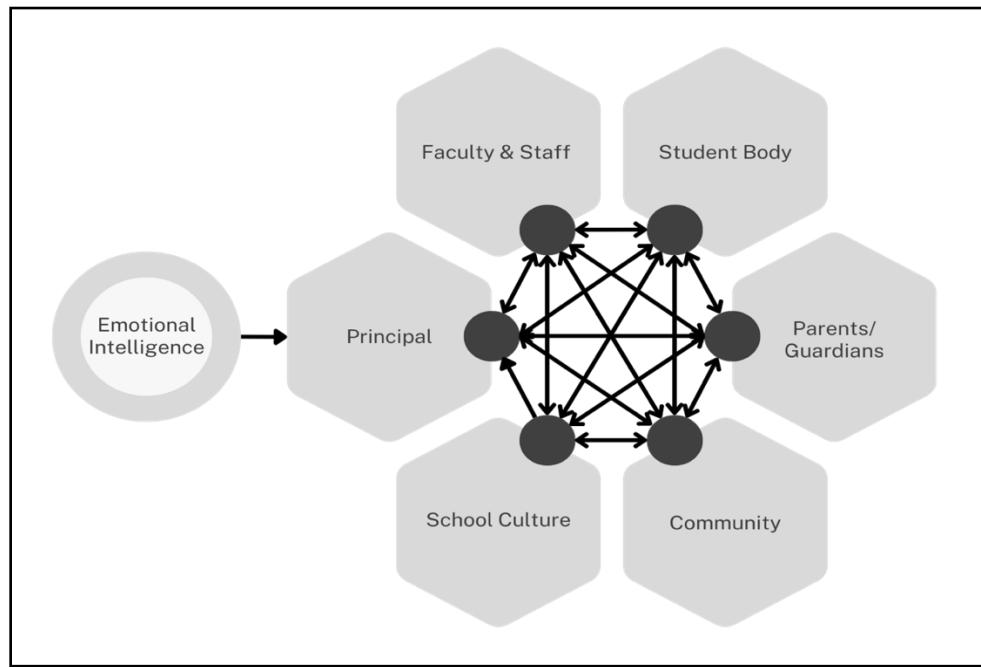
While the connection between emotional intelligence and leadership behaviors has received attention from researchers, studies suggested that transformational leadership behaviors are most closely connected to the emotionality of leadership (Kumar, 2014). There is widespread support for emotional intelligence as an antecedent of transformational leadership behavior that involves acting as a charismatic role model, communicating a vision, and providing individualized support to followers (Walter et al., 2011). Kumar (2014) suggested connections between components of emotional intelligence and dimensions of transformational leadership. In contrast, some studies have reported negative relationships between emotional intelligence and forms of passive leadership, such as management-by-exception and laissez-faire, but this area needs more research. Although these studies were found to be inconclusive or had mitigating factors, there are no studies in which a link between emotional intelligence and leadership behaviors was absent (Walter et al., 2011).

Emotional intelligence and leadership are concepts that are both significant and interconnected (Sadri, 2012). A successful leader must understand emotional intelligence and how it impacts leadership behaviors and outcomes (Kumar, 2014). Ubben et al. (2017) suggested that leaders must be able to alter their leadership style and approach considering any given collection of circumstances to meet the needs of those around them. Consequently, educational

leaders must utilize and understand models of EI and leadership to maximize negative and positive situations and emotions to benefit the organizational culture (McLellan et al., 2017).

Figure 2

The Principal's Influence Through Emotional Intelligence



Note. Conceptual Framework for the Impact of Emotional Intelligence on School Culture. This framework contends that a principal cannot solely impact school culture.

The popularity of the emotional intelligence construct was attributed to the natural human longing to understand better human interaction and the complexities of interpersonal communication (Murphy, 2006). Building from that foundation, measuring emotional intelligence to study its impact across work and social interaction became necessary. Various researchers developed several dynamic intelligence scales to measure the perception of emotions, the regulation of emotions, and the utilization of emotions (O'Connor et al., 2019). The value of emotional intelligence increased as researchers published parallels between high emotional intelligence to success in various fields. Salovey and Pizzaro's research showed that measures of

emotional intelligence successfully predict desired and undesired behaviors in multiple settings (2003). This finding and many others helped solidify the usefulness and value of emotional intelligence as a measurement of predicted success.

Studies regarding the impact of emotional intelligence in education are extensive. As social-emotional learning (SEL) became more popular in school settings, the study of emotional intelligence in school leaders and educators intensified (Freedman, 2005). Greenberg et al. (2003) argued that if well-designed and implemented with fidelity, the SEL curriculum and teaching could positively impact students' health, social and emotional skills, and academic success. However, robust implementation of SEL requires high levels of emotional intelligence in educators and school leaders (Taylor, 2019). Further research suggested that campus administrators in k-12 schools with high emotional intelligence were more successful than those who did not. In his interview with Freedman (2005), Goleman (2000) stated that studies had shown a connection between students' emotional intelligence and academic achievement when school leaders used their emotional intelligence to inspire teachers.

More presently, emotional intelligence and social-emotional learning have come under fire for their implementation in public schools. As some states took steps to incorporate SEL into the standard curriculum, critics argued that it is a component of an ideology of progressive education linked to developing "the whole child" to serve as a replacement for parental responsibility. However, supporters such as the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development (NCSEAD) argue that the movement is based on science and is related to the most recent research (Zhao, 2020).

School Climate Versus School Culture

One of the most common measurements of the feeling or attitude regarding a school is the concept of climate and culture. Students spend a substantial amount of time in schools, so it is naturally essential to be concerned with how the environment feels to students. In addition, the environment impacts the overall social and emotional wellness and directly relates to the recruitment and retention of staff (Spicer, 2016). The two terms are often used synonymously in discussions regarding educational leadership and change, but they are concepts that differ from each other (Kane et al., 2016). Greunert (2008) stated that "school leaders who want to address morale in their buildings must know the distinction between climate and culture" (p. 56).

Climate

The climate of the schools is commonly defined as the character and quality of school life (School Climate Council, 2007). There are many measurements of school climate, and the literature reflects several school climate surveys and tools often used to gauge a campus' overall score. In the same way, multiple models consist of various components of school climate. Much of the research settles on three main components of school climate: engagement in learning, safety, and environment or relational factors (Spittler, 2017; Ryberg et al., 2020; Berg et al., 2017). In other words, school climate is often thought of as the group's attitude, the feeling that is experienced inside the building, or the state of mind of the campus on any given day (Gruenert, 2008).

Culture

The school's culture is considered what is changed through the impact of a positive school climate most often. It is defined as the shared values, rules, belief patterns, teaching and learning approaches, behaviors, and relationships among or across the individuals in a school

(Çakiroğlu et al., 2012). Unlike climate, the school's culture takes many years to change and is deeply rooted in consistency, based on values and beliefs, and is considered to reflect the personality of the group or organization (Gruenert, 2008). This study focused on the school administrator's impact on the school's culture rather than the climate.

Gaps in the Literature

While there is extensive literature on leadership, educational leadership, and emotional intelligence, there are gaps in the research that should be considered in the future as part of ongoing studies. The literature provides minimal research that proves a link between the emotional intelligence quotients of school administrators and teachers to overall student achievement. There are often indirect connections, but proof of direct causation is limited. Further, the research lacks information regarding the inclusion, implementation, and impact of studies on emotional intelligence in teacher or administrator preparatory programs. Finally, an area of future research could be focused on the impact a campus administrator's emotional intelligence has on the recruitment and retention of faculty and staff from year to year.

Summary

Leadership is complex. While there are many studies regarding various theories of leadership and the identification of leadership styles, there is no particular method or set of behaviors relevant to every situation a leader will face. Successful leaders demonstrate the ability to adapt to any number of challenging situations and can understand what behaviors and techniques are most effective given the circumstances. Vygotsky's social learning theory provides the foundation for understanding that learning is a social experience. Individuals learn from their environments and social interactions while testing and refining their social-emotional skills. A strong connection between leadership and emotional intelligence exists in the literature,

which suggests that leaders must be able to understand their environment, able to regulate themselves, and must be able to respond to external factors in order to experience the most desirable outcome in any challenging situation.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Chapter Three outlines the research methods for this qualitative, phenomenological study regarding teachers' perceptions of the campus principal's leadership performance and potential connections to the components of emotional intelligence. The purpose of this approach is discussed in the chapter along with the research question, the participants and setting, data collection procedures, ethical considerations, data analysis procedures, and the correspondence with the theoretical and conceptual frameworks.

The research study aimed to provide insight into the relationship between school culture and the leadership skills of the school principal. Further, this study sought to consider how teachers' perceptions of their principal's leadership skills align with the components of emotional intelligence. The contribution to the related field of research ultimately provides insight into the potential that a principal impacts school culture through leadership skills that may be influenced by emotional intelligence.

Research Questions

Qualitative research aims to capture the experiences that influence individuals' behavior, opinions, attitudes, and beliefs. By exploring these perceptions, qualitative research can help uncover potential causation and association between variables through human experiences and non-numerical data (McLeod, 2019).

This research sought to demonstrate the alignment of teachers' perceptions of their principal's leadership behaviors, the school culture, and the components of emotional intelligence. Insight into the school leader's impact on creating and maintaining school culture is valued information, given the present-day challenges of public educators. School culture has been identified as a solid link to teacher retention and student achievement (Boyd et al., 2011;

Davis, 2019; Barkley et al., 2014). The importance of a school culture that focuses on the individual needs of students and staff, along with a shared goal of positive outcomes for students, is immeasurable. However, the research ascertained that healthy school culture is paramount to the overall success of the school and its stakeholders (DuFour & Mattos, 2013; & Leithwood et al., 2019). The research question in this study aimed to clarify the principal's impact on the school culture and whether or not the perceived skills of the principal are related to components of emotional intelligence. The ultimate goal was to determine if there was a potential connection between the perceived emotional intelligence of the school principal and the perceived school culture. The following questions drove the study:

Research question #1: How are teachers' perceptions of their school administrator's leadership performance aligned with their perceptions of the school's culture?

Research question #2: In what ways are teachers' perceptions of the campus principal's leadership behavior aligned with components of emotional intelligence?

Qualitative Research Method

Qualitative research is an effective established social sciences method used to gain insight and understands people's experiences. It can be broadly defined as an attempt to understand and explore variables contextualized and interpretive (Nassaji, 2020). Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested that answering research questions and hypotheses involves examining relationships between and among variables. This qualitative study aimed to determine whether a relationship exists between teachers' perceptions of their campus principal's leadership performance, the perceived school culture, and the components of emotional intelligence related to the principal. These data were gathered through a narrative research approach using interviews

and focus groups. Likert Scale staff surveys were also used to collect information on teachers' perceptions of the campus culture.

Phenomenological Approach

Lester (1999) stated that "phenomenology is concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual" (p.1). Phenomenological research describes rather than explains and is initially considered valid when the researcher is free from a hypothesis or preconceived notion of the conclusion (Husserl, 1970). More recently, it has been accepted that the role of the researcher is a subjective party rather than a detached impartial participant (Plummer, 1983; & Stanley & Wise, 1993). The phenomenological approach was suitable for this study because of the participant's relationship with the information sought. Their experiences and knowledge regarding the school leader and culture provide the data needed to present findings in the study.

A phenomenological approach can include interviews, conversations, participant observations, action research, focus meetings, and analysis of written documentation and communication (Lester, 1999). This study relied on formal interviews, focus group meetings, and a Likert scale survey. Data from these interactions were analyzed by coding, organizing, and interpreting the various responses of the study participants.

The validity of a phenomenological approach relies on the accuracy of the coded results as provided by the researcher (Creswell, 2013). Validation criteria for qualitative studies, according to Whittemore et al. (2011), are credibility (the results must accurately reflect the participants' intended meaning), authenticity (a variety of voices should be considered), criticality (a critical appraisal of the research should exist, and integrity (the researcher must be

self-critical). Further, the participants should be selected based on their knowledge and experiences of the studied phenomenon (Cresswell, 2013).

Description of the Specific Research Approach

Qualitative research focuses on the humanistic or idealistic approach to understanding people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, and behaviors regarding what they have experienced (Pathak et al., 2013). The phenomenological research approach describes and interprets the participants' experiences (Bhandari, 2022). This study used participant surveys, interviews, and focus groups to gather the data.

Participant Surveys

This study utilized a survey disseminated to certified high school teaching staff to determine the teachers' perception of the school's culture. The survey was distributed utilizing a Google Form to maximize accessibility and ease of use. Participants were asked to provide demographic information to identify their teaching experience, the years dedicated to working at their current school, and their highest degree earned. In addition, participants responded to statements of agreeability related to the school culture. The data collected for each statement ranged from 1 to 5. The numbers indicated 1 "strongly disagree," 2 "disagree," 3 "neutral," 4 "agree," and 5 "strongly agree." The identity of study participants was protected by assigning a participant number upon completion of the survey. This number was used to communicate further involvement in the study with selected individuals.

Semi-Structured Interviews

One-to-one interviews are a common practice and an essential aspect of qualitative studies that provide participants' perceptions, understandings, and experiences (Ryan et al., 2016). A review of the participant's survey responses was conducted to select a variety of

respondents to continue to the interview stage of the study. This variety consisted of varying teacher experience, degree levels, and longevity at the campus. The selected individuals were notified via phone and asked to schedule a structured interview. The interview questions focused on open-ended questions that probed school culture and principal leadership skills.

Focus Groups

Focus group interviews are valuable for collecting qualitative data in the social context (Dilshad & Latif, 2013; Gundumogula, 2020). They are a "carefully planned series of discussions, designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment" (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 5). This approach lends itself to conversation and discussion that is more in-depth and allows participants to listen and respond to others' responses (Carter et al., 2014). Thus, the process results in data that are often deeper and richer by way of social interaction and provides greater confidence in the themes determined by the researcher (Gundumogula, 2020). Participants were selected based on their one-to-one interview responses. The selection was based on the depth of interview responses and the participants' openness to provide information responsive to the questions.

Triangulation

Triangulation of the data drives the comprehensive understanding of the research being conducted and can be used as a strategy to test the study's validity (Carter et al., 2014). This study's triangulation was achieved by gathering three data sources, including surveys, structured interviews, and focus groups. Survey data were collected using a secure electronic form distributed to all certified teaching staff on campus. Structured interviews were conducted via video conference and were completed with participants selected from the survey responses. The

focus group was conducted via video conference and included selected participants from one-to-one interviews.

Description of Study Participants and Setting

Researchers must provide a sufficiently thick description, providing an interpretation of complex situations (Drew, 2022). "Thick description refers to the researcher's task of both describing and interpreting observed social action (or behavior) within its particular context" (Ponterotto, 2006, p. 543). Researchers achieve external validity by accomplishing a sufficiently thick description of participants and the setting (Amankwaa, 2016).

This study was conducted in a large school district in a suburban Texas area. As of the 2022-2023 school year, the district had 75 public school campuses serving more than 66,000 students. The student population comprised 33.71 % White, 36.76 Asian, 12.86% Hispanic, 11.11% African American, 4.91% two or more races, 0.58% American Indian/Alaskan, and 0.06% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. The district employed more than 4,500 teachers with an average teaching experience of 10.2 years and an average of 5.4 years of teaching experience in the district. Of the 8,000 employees in the district, 31.2% have advanced degrees. Staffing ratios are reported to be 22:1 for K-4th grades, 25:1 for 5th grade, and 26:1 for 6th-12th grades. The district's annual budget exceeds \$692 million while boasting a state accountability rating of A. The rating includes the growth measures reported by the State assessment data resulting in 90% of students that met state standards. The attendance rate of students is 99.3%, and the four-year graduation rate is 98.3%.

The district was considered a fast-growth district in the state and nation, boasting a growth rate ranging from 4% to 30% annually since the early 1990s. Independent demographers anticipate the district to be built with 80,000 students by 2030. Hence, considered one of the

more popular districts, it was identified as one of the top ten districts in the state regarding academic excellence and community partnerships. There are mechanisms to receive staff and community feedback and forums for discussing topics of interest with all stakeholders.

Data Collection Procedures

Qualitative research requires acknowledging a "relationship between the researcher and the researched" (Ormston et al., 2014, p.8). So, the data collected are mediated through the researcher as a human instrument who understands the reflexivity of the study. Reflexive strategies are critical to becoming aware of the researcher's role in the study to understand and disclose their background and relationship to the study and the potential outcomes (Roger et al., 2018). The goal of a qualitative study is for the participants to narrate the research through their own experiences and beliefs, effectively providing insight into why they think or feel the way they do (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Management of Data

Qualitative studies produce data by individuals that must be managed and protected (Lin, 2009). These data contain identifiable information about the participants of the study that must be treated with strict confidentiality at all stages of research (McCrae & Murray, 2008). All information gathered for this study was protected with integrity and stored securely for the appropriate period required by the University.

Survey Protocol

While they are not ideal for in-depth information, surveys provide a foundational starting point for qualitative researchers and reveal information that may need to be further addressed later in the research plan (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This study focused on closed-ended questions to gather perception data from participants related to school culture. Survey responses

were limited to a Likert Scale to rate agreeableness ranging from strongly agree to disagree in reply to specific statements strongly. The survey questions were constructed from themes discovered during the literature review. Data from the survey responses were analyzed and compared to teacher perceptions of leadership skills to formulate either a positive, neutral, or negative association with the components of emotional intelligence.

Interview Protocol

Interviews are used widely in qualitative research and are typically executed to gather information about a participant's perceptions, experiences, and beliefs regarding the studied topic (Ryan et al., 2009). The individual and focus group interviews were recorded and transcribed to code responses into emerging themes related to school culture and attributed to emotional intelligence components. In addition, text mining was utilized to study deeper responses, such as word frequency, sentiment, clustering, and bi-gram networking. Semi-structured interviews were conducted via video conferencing following the completion of the survey. The questions posed during the interview provided an opportunity to expound on the themes of the study and generated qualitative data to be further reviewed and checked for validity.

Focus Group

This study's third form of data is based on information collected during a focus group interview. Focus groups are common in qualitative studies and provide opportunities for a more in-depth understanding of social issues (Nyumba et al., 2018). An individual's perception is developed by their personal socio-cultural experiences, driven by interpersonal communication with others (Berkes, 2004). Focus groups also create a setting for rich discussion that elicits deeper reflection on complex topics (Drake, 2013).

The focus group in this study was selected based on responses from one-to-one interviews. Individual participants whose responses during the interviews demonstrated an understanding of school culture, leadership skills, and emotional intelligence were selected to participate in the focus group. These interviews were conducted via videoconference and were recorded for transcription purposes.

Data Analysis Procedure

Qualitative research relies on the participants' experiences, whose information can be shared most accurately and efficiently through a verbal interview. The verbal responses are transcribed and studied to find meaning related to the research questions (Ryan et al., 2009). This study included a data analysis procedure consisting of coding and text mining for data reduction purposes. The data were displayed in table and graph format for interpretation.

Coding System

Text data requires much time to analyze and is best interpreted through organized coding (Creswell, 2015). Coding requires the researcher to establish themes within the qualitative data to organize responses to aid in data analysis. Coding qualitative data is completed through one of two types of coding, inductive or deductive analysis. The inductive analysis allows themes to emerge as the researcher analyzes the data resulting in concepts being developed due to the data. The deductive analysis consists of a predetermined set of concepts or theories that the researcher must utilize to organize the data (Bingham, 2022).

This study utilized the inductive analysis approach to make meaning from the data and develop responsible themes. Data were gathered from open-ended questions and coded and organized according to the emergent themes represented by the participants' responses. Further, the data were subjected to text mining to check for validity and accuracy.

Rigor in Qualitative Research

Rigor, or trustworthiness, in qualitative research ensures the process is complete and transparent. "The goal of rigor in qualitative research can be described as ensuring that the research design, method, and conclusions are explicit, public, replicable, open to critique, and free of bias" (Johnson et al., 2020, para. 43). Semi-structured interviews are considered rigorous if well-designed and implemented with consistency (Ryan et al., 2009). Rigor can be determined by the degree of credibility, transferability, and dependability within a study (Koch, 2006).

Credibility

Qualitative credibility is the equivalent of internal validity in quantitative research. Credibility is achieved by representing plausible information deduced from the original data source and confirmed as an accurate interpretation of the participants' intended views (Korstjens & Moswer, 2018). Strategies to enhance credibility include prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, and member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Sim & Sharp, 1998). Member checks were completed at each data interpretation stage to ensure credibility in this study. In addition, triangulation was achieved through the research design.

Transferability

Transferability is "the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts or settings with other respondents" (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p. 121). Transferability is accomplished by providing a sufficiently thick description of the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability was attained in this study with a detailed description of the participants and the setting for the study.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the study's stability, consistency, and replicability (Forero et al., 2018). Dependability can be demonstrated by creating a solid audit trail that describes the steps taken throughout the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability was demonstrated by including a colleague and researcher to review the materials and the developed themes for accuracy. This peer reviewer held a doctoral degree in educational leadership and was the head of the district's curriculum and assessment team at the time of this study.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the degree to which other researchers can confirm the findings of a study to be derived from the data and not driven by the researcher's thoughts or beliefs (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study's confirmability was achieved by creating and utilizing a clear audit trail within a reflexive journal.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics in research are paramount to a successful and professionally completed study. Ethical issues such as voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, the potential for harm, and results communication are all areas to be considered carefully by the researcher (Bhandari, 2022).

Ethics within this research study were carefully considered and managed. Individuals were provided with informed consent as voluntary participants at each stage of the research. In addition, all participants were protected through anonymity and confidentiality measures. No participant names were associated with any data reported in the study results. Surveys were compiled using Google Forms. Interview data were organized into themes using an inductive

coding approach. All data were stored securely throughout the study. Rigor was established by demonstrating credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Ethical considerations were aligned with the guidelines presented by the (OHRP) Office for Human Research Protections. Written consent from the district's authorized administrator was granted, and no data were collected before Carson-Newman University IRB approval.

Summary

This study utilized qualitative measures to gather, analyze, and code the data. Participants in this study were identified as certified teachers. Individuals voluntarily responded to a survey, one-to-one, and focus group interviews. The researcher selected participants at each level based on responsiveness to the questions and responses that indicate an understanding of school culture and leadership qualities and skills. The qualitative research analysis was completed utilizing an inductive coding process and included text mining to identify word frequency, sentiment, negations, and bi-gram networks.

Qualitative research is an established method within management and leadership studies (Lanka et al., 2021). Some research questions, such as those related to societal phenomena, are best approached qualitatively rather than quantitatively (Busetto et al., 2020). The concepts studied in this research required a qualitative approach to capture the essence of the subject matter, which is directly related to Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory. Chapter Four sets forth the description of participants, the presentation of collected data, and data analysis.

Chapter Four: Presentation of Findings

Chapter Four explores the findings from the data analysis completed during this study.

Qualitative research findings are presented by using illustrative quotes and additional visual representations to demonstrate the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data (Anderson, 2010). This qualitative, phenomenological study sought to identify how the perceived leadership skills of the campus principal impacted the school culture. This chapter is structured with eight sections that include an overview of the research questions, a description of the research approach, a description of the participants and setting, methodology, a presentation of the data, the study findings, trustworthiness techniques, the coding table, and the chapter summary.

Research Questions

This study sought to demonstrate the alignment of teachers' perceptions of their principal's leadership behaviors, the school culture, and the components of emotional intelligence. The research questions in this study attempted to clarify the principal's impact on the school culture and whether the perceived skills of the principal are related to the components of emotional intelligence. Ultimately, the study aimed to determine if there was a connection between the perceived emotional intelligence of the principal and the perceived school culture.

Research Questions. These research questions directed this study to answer the following questions:

1. How are teachers' perceptions of their school administrator's leadership performance aligned with their perceptions of the school's culture?
2. In what ways are teachers' perceptions of the campus principal's leadership skills aligned with the components of emotional intelligence?

Description of the Research Approach

This qualitative phenomenological study targeted the participant's first-hand knowledge and experiences of the information gathered. Thus, to understand the participants' beliefs, experiences, attitudes, and behaviors regarding what they have experienced, the study utilized a closed-ended survey, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group to gather the data. Individual and group responses were recorded, transcribed, and coded to develop categories and themes.

Description of the Population, Sample, and Setting

Participants included volunteers from three randomly selected schools within the district; one elementary, one middle school, and one high school. The survey was distributed to 100 teachers across the three campuses. Fifty-four percent of the targeted participants responded to the survey, including 14 elementary teachers, 27 middle school teachers, and 13 high school teachers. Of those teachers, 29 had a bachelor's degree, and 25 had a master's degree or higher. Eighteen survey participants indicated an interest in participating in the study's second phase, and nine participants completed one-to-one interviews. Finally, seven interviewed teachers indicated an interest in participating in the final stage of the study, and three were selected to comprise the focus group. Member checks and confidential peer debriefings were used upon completion of response coding to ensure data accuracy across all sampling opportunities.

Table 2

Participant Degree Level and Years of Experience

Highest Degree	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+
	Years of Experience				
Bachelors	9	10	2	4	4
Masters (+)	8	3	5	5	4

Note. Years of experience as reported by participants.

The study polled 2.2% of the total teaching population from 4% of all campuses, with responses recorded from 1.2% of the total teaching population in the district. For generalization of the data and results, this information should be kept in mind.

Methodology

Phenomenology is a methodological approach to qualitative research that seeks to investigate and understand human experiences or phenomena and their meaning (Yüksel & Yıldırım, 2015). Qualitative studies require methods of raw coding data to understand and categorize the data collected. The benefits of qualitative coding include increased validity, decreased bias, and transparency in the study's methodology (Ary et al., 2017).

The research for this study was completed by gathering experiential data through a closed-ended survey, one-to-one interviews, and a focus group. The survey responses were collected using a secure electronic survey sent to participants. The data provided a baseline of the participant's perceptions of their school's culture. This data collection portion established the overall perception of the campus culture that was used to compare other qualitative data to answer the research questions.

The data collected from the interviews and the focus group were transcribed and subjected to inductive, grounded theory coding to establish emerging themes. Inductive coding, or ground-up coding, was used to eliminate preconceived notions about the code. Rather, the process allowed the themes to emerge from the raw data. Vivo coding was applied to maintain the participants' responses verbatim to eliminate false interpretations and increase validity. Further, axial coding was used to relate codes across all data sets. Finally, the codes were analyzed and sorted into final categories. All transcripts were read multiple times to establish

researcher familiarity with the data. The data were analyzed by coding numerous times to check for consistency and reliability.

A further layer of data analysis was conducted by utilizing text data mining methods to demonstrate word or phrase frequency, word relationships in the form of bi-graphs, and word sentiment. Text mining is the machine-supported analysis of text accomplished by extracting patterns, themes, and sentiment from text documents for knowledge discovery (Hotho et al., 2005). This process provides bi-grams (pairs of two consecutive words) and sentiment (positive, negative, or neutral feeling.).

Presentation of the Data

The data from this qualitative study are presented to answer this study's research questions. The data analysis of the closed-ended survey, semi-structured interviews, and semi-structured focus groups provide phenomenological insight into the study participants' experiences and perceptions regarding their school leaders' performance and their school leaders' skills in conjunction with the perceived school culture and the emotional intelligence of the school leader.

Close-Ended Survey Results

The survey data that were collected showed a strong positive trend of agreement with the statements provided, which indicated a perception of a positive school culture across all three campuses. Collectively, 94.2% of the responses indicated either agreement or strong agreement with the statements. In contrast, only 5.8% of the responses indicated neutrality, disagreement, or strong disagreement with the statements. Table 3 shows the collective array of responses.

Table 3*Survey Responses: Item Analysis*

Closed-ended Survey Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My current campus has a clear, shared goal and vision.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.85%)	8 (14.81%)	45 (83.33%)
There is a sense of value placed on and an expectation of continuous improvement.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.85%)	6 (11.11%)	47 (87.04%)
Staff are valued members of the school.	0 (0%)	1 (1.85%)	3 (5.56%)	6 (11.11%)	44 (81.48%)
The campus is a safe environment that is conducive to teaching and learning.	0 (0%)	2 (3.7%)	2 (3.7%)	11 (20.37%)	39 (72.22%)
Staff enjoy their jobs and look forward to coming to work each day.	1 (1.85%)	2 (3.7%)	5 (9.26%)	19 (35.19%)	27 (50%)
Staff are interdependent and value each other.	1 (1.85%)	0 (0%)	2 (3.7%)	19 (35.19%)	32 (59.26%)
Relationships are an important component within the school.	1 (1.85%)	1 (1.85%)	0 (0%)	12 (22.22%)	40 (74.07%)
There is a sense of community within the school.	1 (1.85%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.85%)	20 (37.04%)	32 (59.26%)
Staff are provided with frequent clear communication that supports their ability to do their job.	0 (0%)	1 (1.85%)	2 (3.7%)	17 (31.48%)	34 (62.96%)
When there are concerns or challenges, members of the campus work together to support each other and to find solutions.	0 (0%)	1 (1.85%)	2 (3.7%)	15 (27.78%)	36 (66.67%)
Totals	4 (0.74%)	8 (1.48%)	19 (3.52%)	133 (24.63%)	376 (69.63%)

Note. Survey results are listed as the number of responses (percentage of total responses).

Further analysis of the survey data provided information about years of experience, educational level, and longevity at the current campus. Participants with 0-5 total years of teaching experience, which included 17 individuals) indicated agreement 92.2%, contrasting with 7.8% showing neutrality or disagreement. Participants with 6-10 years of experience, which had 13 individuals, agreed 97.7% of the time and were neutral or in disagreement 2.3%. Participants with 11-15 years of experience, which included 13 individuals, indicated agreement 100% across all statements. Teachers with 16-20 years of experience (nine individuals) agreed 84.4% and were neutral or in disagreement 15.6%. Those with 21 or more years of experience (eight individuals) agreed 96.3% of the time and demonstrated neutrality or disagreement 3.7% of the time. The average years of experience for all participants was 11.4 years, with an average of 5.4 years at the current campus.

Regarding educational level, participants whose highest earned degree was a bachelor's degree (29 individuals) made up 53.2% of responses that agreed and 0.56% of the responses that were neutral or in disagreement. Participants with master's degrees or beyond (25 individuals) made up 41.1% of the responses that agreed and 5.2% of responses that were neutral or in disagreement.

Semi-structured Interviews

A total of nine teachers representing elementary, middle, and high school participated in the semi-structured interview process. These interviews provided the opportunity to study the knowledge, experiences, beliefs, and descriptions in response to five open-ended questions related to school culture and their schools' leaders. All participants were asked the same questions (Appendix A) and were allowed to speak openly about their experiences while adding any relevant details. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and read multiple times to

establish familiarization. Once coded, member checks were conducted to validate the information provided by the participants, in addition to checking for each participant's intent. In addition, a peer debriefer was used to validate the coding and interpretation of the interview responses.

Focus Groups

A total of three participants representing one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school, participated in the focus group. These individuals were selected based on their knowledge and understanding of school culture, principal leadership, and emotional intelligence demonstrated during the one-to-one interviews. Each participant responded to each of the five questions (Appendix B) and was allowed to elaborate further or provide additional information as the group discussion took place. Participants were encouraged to speak openly about their experiences and to respond to other participants with relevant information, either confirming or disconfirming their own experiences. The focus group session was recorded, transcribed, and read multiple times to establish familiarization. Once coded, member checks were conducted to validate the information provided and check for each participant's intent. A peer debriefer was used to review the final coding to check for validation.

Semi-structured Interviews and Focus Group Results

Interview responses were analyzed and reduced utilizing an inductive coding process which transforms data into theory or interpretation. The process allows for the development of categories and themes and helps to establish them from the ground up rather than attempting to categorize data into predetermined themes. The data reduction process involved identifying relevant points, interpreting the data through inductive reasoning, and ultimately establishing themes to answer the research questions. The data analysis across the semi-structured interviews

and the focus group resulted in the following themes: awareness, continuous improvement, effective communication, effective support, empathy, and interpersonal relationships.

Data Analysis and Research Questions. Three data sources (closed-ended surveys, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group) were used to answer two research questions:

1. How are teachers' perceptions of their school administrator's leadership performance aligned with their perceptions of the school's culture?
2. In what ways are teachers' perceptions of the campus principal's leadership skills aligned with the components of emotional intelligence?

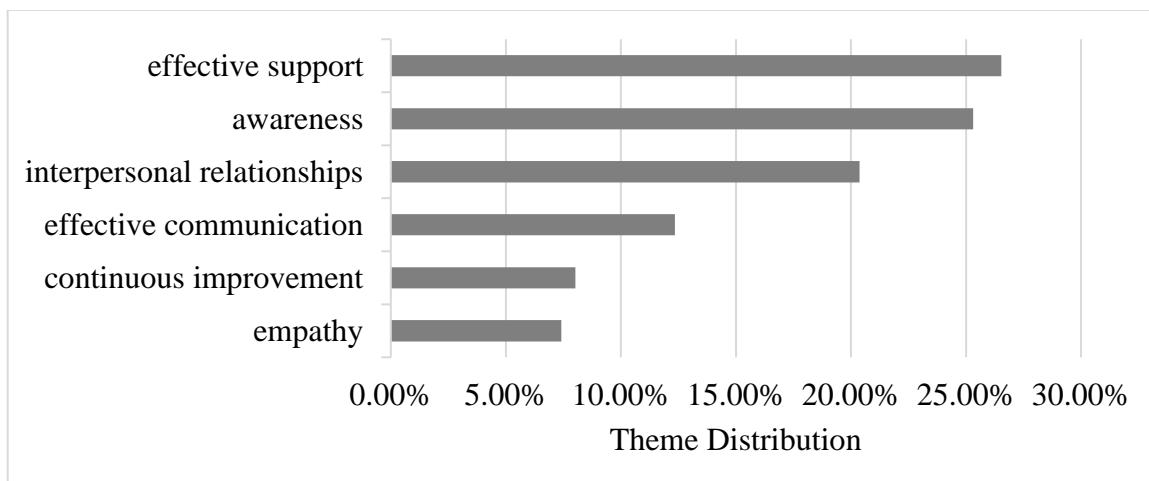
Emerging Themes

The qualitative data analysis process involved six themes: awareness, continuous improvement, effective communication, support, empathy, and interpersonal relationships.

Figure 3 represents the ranking of each theme by the percentage distribution of the entire data set. Effective support, awareness, and interpersonal relationships ranked in the top three.

Figure 3

Percentage Distribution of Themes



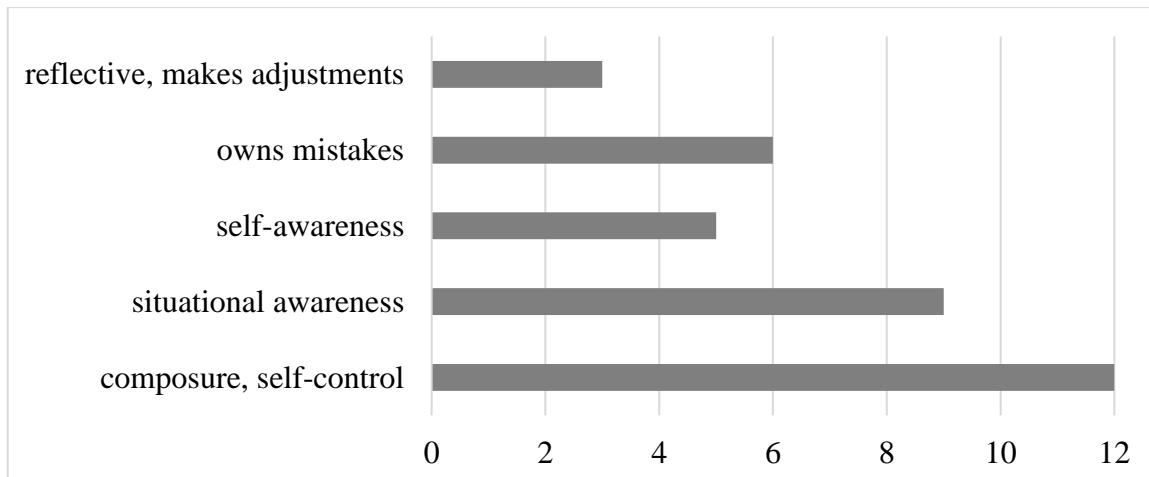
Note. Theme distribution by percentage as reflected by the data coding.

During the data analysis process, participants' knowledge and understanding of the related topics of school culture, the school leader's skills and styles, and emotional intelligence were confirmed. The coding process, including direct participant quotations, is presented in the coding table.

Awareness. Awareness is defined as having knowledge, being informed, and being able to perceive situations or facts (Gafoor, 2012). Data gathered by semi-structured one-to-one interviews and the focus group established a general theme of awareness supported by six emerging categories across 35 coded responses, which accounted for 22% of all responses: composure/self-control, situational awareness, self-awareness, ownership of mistakes, and reflection/making adjustments.

Figure 4

Awareness Categories



Note. The figure represents the number of times each category appeared in the coding table.

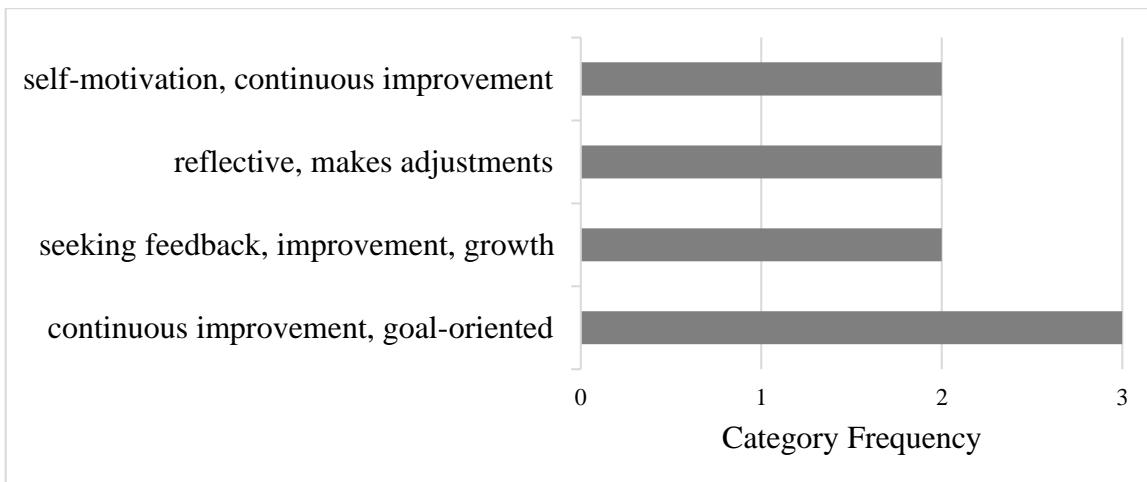
These categories, when individually defined in the context of the study, promote the evidence of awareness as a valid leadership skill. While correlating their experiences with their campus principals, participants provided these traits in response to questions regarding school

culture and their principal's ability to handle stressful situations. Regarding COVID and the principal's response to the current school culture, participant one stated,

My principal started off like [sic], 'that was a really tough year for me as a leader, and I apologize.' That was extremely difficult for everyone. Because she was able to admit...we were like [sic], 'I wasn't my best self either.'

This data demonstrated the principal's self-awareness by reflecting on and adjusting the style of leadership based on the needs of others. Participant two confirmed this sentiment when reflecting on the principal's awareness, reflection, and ability to admit mistakes. The participant stated, "...when they admit their own fallibility and when they admit their own mistakes, things they wish they had done differently, that's humility." Further evidence provided by participant four suggested that composure and self-control are important factors related to awareness. The participant stated, "this says a lot about who [he] is as a leader because he's not one to get caught up in the moment emotionally."

Continuous Improvement. Despite the phrase *continuous improvement* being a long-standing term in educational change and leadership, this theme emerged in the data analysis through four categories: self-motivation/continuous improvement, reflection/adjusting, seeking feedback for improvement and growth, and continuous improvement related to shared goals. There was a total of nine specific responses that established this theme which accounted for 5% of all responses.

Figure 5*Continuous Improvement Categories*

Note. The figure represents the number of times each category appeared in the coding table.

Several participants focused on clear indicators of ongoing self-motivated professional growth.

Participant three stated,

I know that part of what my boss has been studying is leadership style. If I walk into my boss's office, there's [sic] 15 books on leadership that he's in the middle of reading. So, like [sic], there's always a way for that to shift. That reminded me of something that I read, which was like [sic] 'an environment that isn't safe to disagree with is an environment that's not focused on growth. It's focused on control.' And I think that's definitely where we're headed.

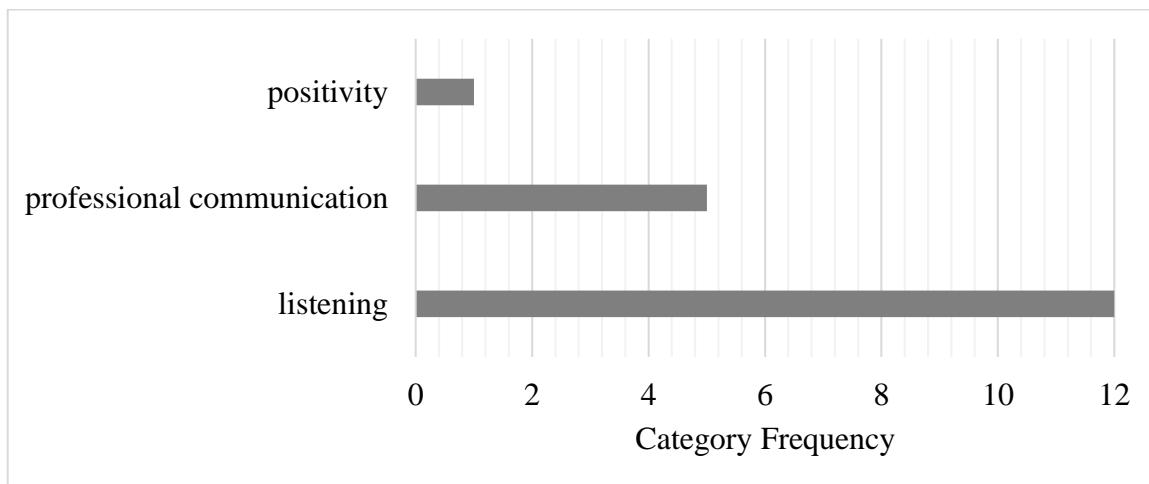
Other participants focused on the change process and their principals seeking feedback to initiate improvement while focusing on a common goal. Participant four offered that their principal is "open to hearing feedback that's negative, too," and that "he's really good at asking for feedback" for continuous improvement. Participant one added that "he also keeps us focused on the end

goal, no matter how stressful it is... that's important because it's so easy for people to [get off track]."

Effective Communication. Effective communication is a common theme that appears in educational leadership literature. A leader's ability to communicate effectively has been established as a factor in the leader's overall success (Landry, 2019). In addition, effective communication consists of the ability to listen, which was confirmed by the data gathered in this study (Wilshiere, 2021). This theme ranked as the 4th highest of the six themes consisting of 13.5% of the total responses. The coding process produced three categories: positivity, professional communication, and listening.

Figure 6

Effective Communication Categories



Note. The figure represents the number of times each category appeared in the coding table.

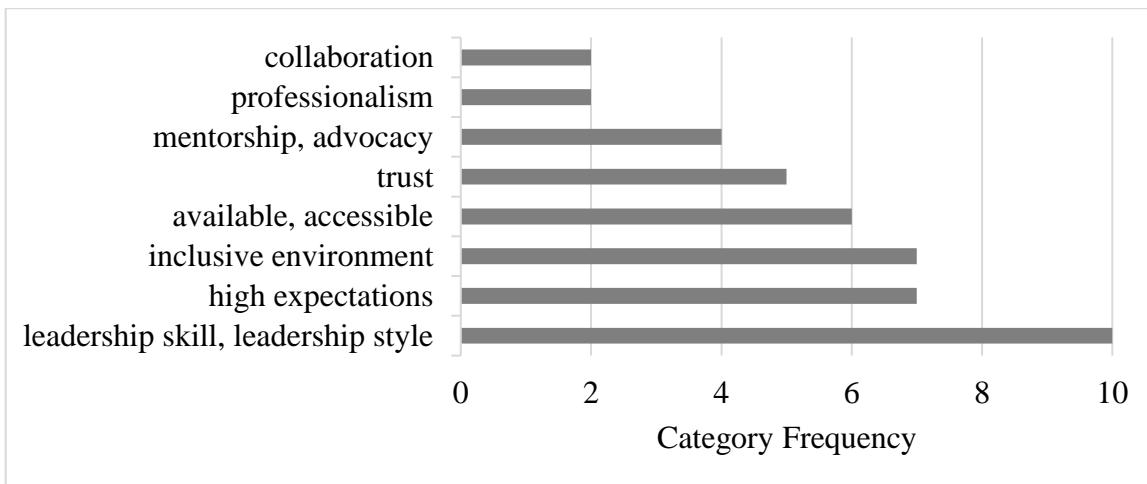
As demonstrated by the data, listening was the most common input provided by participants during the one-to-one interviews and the focus group session. Participant seven stated,

I've always felt like administration, of course, under [the principal]'s leadership, has always been very open and willing to listen. It's not one of those things where when you go to your principal for a problem, they tell you to get over it and move on with your life. It's...there's always a, let's help you troubleshoot a solution, or thank you for bringing that to our attention, or here's why this request is a no. It doesn't feel totalitarian. It feels like we're on a team, and it feels like the administration is there to support us.

In responding to the question regarding specific principal strengths, participant 9 responded with, "I think one thing about [her] is she listens first."

Additional responses within the effective communication theme focused on clear and professional communication and positivity. Participant three stated, "I think her standards, and just like the way she communicates, and the way that she makes people feel welcomed and heard and loved, is huge because then that kind of gets us our best work because we know that she's gonna [sic] be there for us at the end of the day."

Effective Support. Participants provided data to suggest that effective support is accomplished in a variety of ways by their administrators. This theme accounted for 43 responses, representing 26.5% of all coded responses. The various categories established through the data analysis include leadership skills/styles, high expectations, inclusive environment, availability/accessibility, trust, mentorship/advocacy, professionalism, and collaboration. Figure 7 provides the frequency for each category related to effective support.

Figure 7*Effective Support Categories*

Note. The figure represents the number of times each category appeared in the coding table.

Participants provided data suggesting that leadership skill and style impacted their support. Participants one, four, and nine reflected that their leaders embody a servant leadership style. In contrast, participant one added that their administrator's "walk and talk match," suggesting an alignment with words and action. Data relative to high expectations have been mentioned a total of seven times. Participants included that high levels of support accompanied the high expectations set forth by their principals. Participant 1 stated, "I think part of [the support] is the fact that he may hold a high bar for us, but he gives us every possible tool to reach it." Additionally, participants expounded that their principals create inclusive environments that allow them to be themselves, where all voices are heard, and there is support emotionally, physically, and environmentally.

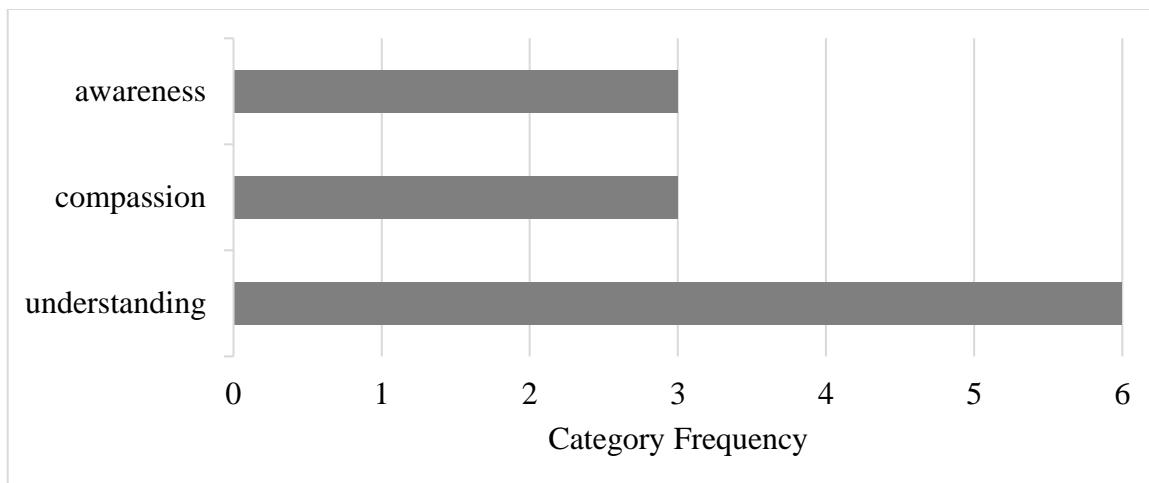
Empathy. Empathy can be defined as "understanding how others feel and being compassionate toward them" (Miller, n.d., para. 1). Empathetic leadership has been identified as an important concept in successful school leadership that is directly tied to campus culture (Tutt,

2022). Empathy is also directly tied to components of emotional intelligence (Westfall, 2021).

This theme was established through data categories related to understanding, awareness, and compassion.

Figure 8

Empathy Categories



Note. The figure represents the number of times each category appeared in the coding table.

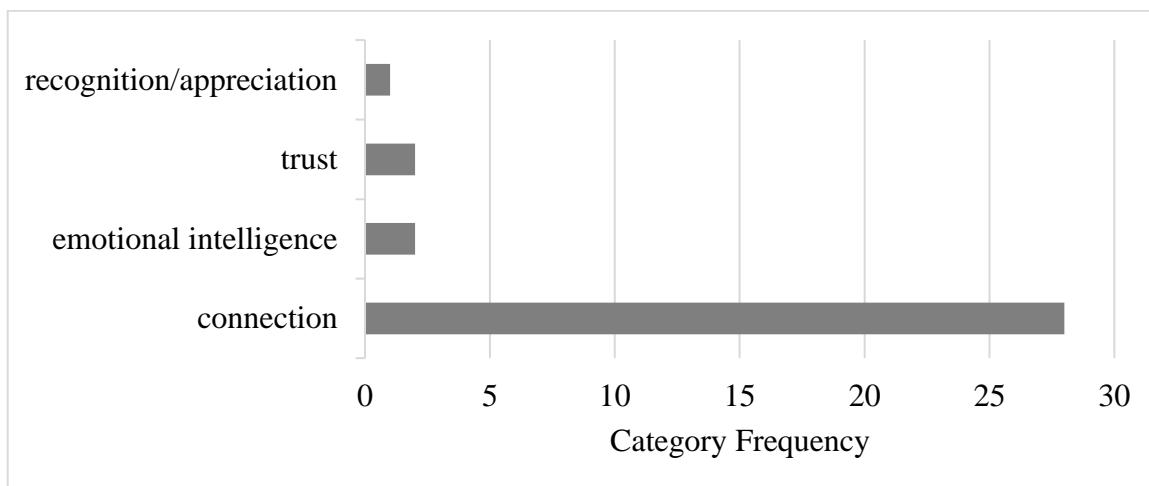
Many participants voiced the increased importance of empathy given the challenges faced during COVID, the current circumstances related to post-COVID recovery, and staffing shortages. These data show that principals responded to circumstances and adjusted expectations to ease the concerns and stress of staff. Participant two reflected on the "compassion and empathy" shown during COVID. Participant three offered that,

If you feel like you need to cry, she's there to help you through things, and it's like she's there to coach you and to be the shoulder to cry on if you need to. And I think that is like [sic] one of the biggest things is like [sic], there's gonna [sic] be some hard times, and you're gonna [sic] have to have those hard conversations, but that at the end of the day, it comes out of love and respect.

Interpersonal Relationships. Relationships are arguably one of the most important aspects of school leadership. Given the current challenges of stress and anxiety, individuals are seeking to preserve the human connection, which can enhance teacher and student motivation (Trust, 2021). The relationship theme in this study was represented by 33 responses across the following categories: connection, emotional intelligence, awareness, connection, emotional intelligence, recognition, and trust.

Figure 9

Interpersonal Relationships Categories



Note. The figure represents the number of times each category appeared in the coding table.

These data show a strong association with the literature regarding human connection as an important factor in interpersonal relationships. The participants provided insights through terms and phrases such as "approachability," "care," and "emotionally connected." Participant five noted that the administrator follows staff on social media to "stay connected with us...in our personal lives." She explained how the principal demonstrated a connection by recognizing her husband and greeting him by name despite never having met him.

It was also observed that many participants equated relationships and connection with understanding and empathy regarding the challenges teachers face daily. Participant one said, [My principal] wanted to see what [co-teaching] is like. And she was like [sic], 'oh, now I get what you guys have been saying has been hard about this, now let's problem solve together.' And so, I think she's so good at responding to feelings because she tries to keep that connection and that relationship with us and not lose touch of what we're doing. And so, when I go to her for a situation, I really feel like she gets what I'm saying because she's living it with me. It's not just someone who I'm like [sic], 'well, you've been in your office all week, so you haven't seen [it].'

Other participants mentioned the family atmosphere. Participant six noted that the positive culture that has been created through relationships has resulted in interdependency and support for teammates who are experiencing personal challenges.

Emotional intelligence was mentioned by participants one and four. These individuals expressed the importance of the school leader's ability to manage disagreements and stressful situations while avoiding damage to the positive campus culture. Participant four stated that emotional intelligence must understand that "we are people first, and we can't pour out until we've been poured into."

Text Mining Analysis

Data mining is a form of data analysis that has increased in popularity since the late 1990s. Often referred to as text mining or text analytics, data mining uses language in the form of written responses obtained from any source to analyze and use data in a variety of settings for a variety of purposes. Researchers began using text as data to track consumer statistical information such as sentiment (emotional or feeling) to improve marketing strategies. Thus, this

is beneficial because it qualifies public opinion, which can better inform companies regarding trends and the needs of consumers. This approach has also supported other areas, such as the stock market and political election predictions (Dexter, 2017). Text mining and qualitative research are compatible and continue to gain traction in modern research (Yu et al., 2011).

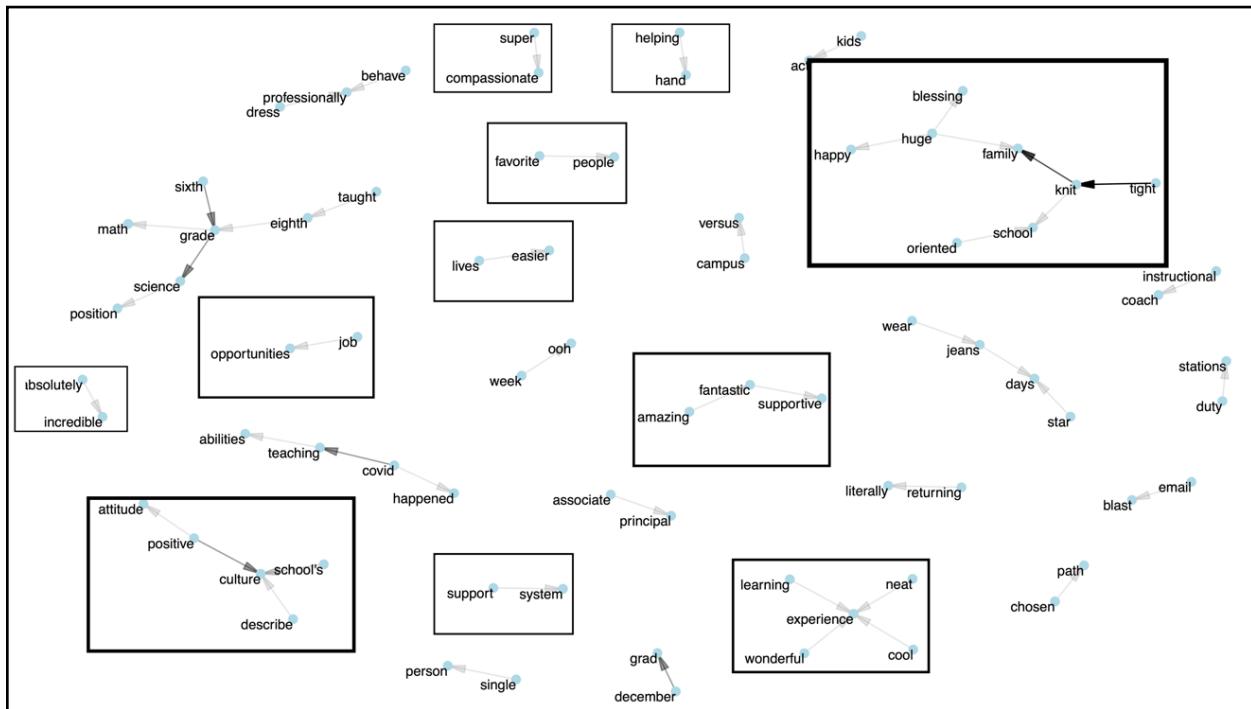
The text mining analysis was conducted post-inductive coding to check for trustworthiness. The text mining results revealed strong parallels between the categories and themes created by inductive coding within this study. The text analysis was completed using the open-source *tidytext R* package developed by Silge and Robinson (2016). This analysis consists of the manipulation of data stored in columns (variables) and rows (observations or responses) (Silge and Robinson, 2016). Data from this study were organized accordingly and subjected to various automated methods packages within the RStudio software, including *tidyverse* (2019) and *tm* (2022). Finally, the data were compared to the results of the inductive coding process.

Bi-gram Networks. Bi-gram networks provide frequency analyses by determining how often one keyword is followed by another, demonstrating the relationship between the two (Ashkiani, 2017). This data analysis resulted in the networking of words that were frequently paired together. The results provide a clear picture of the intent of the participant and the trustworthiness of the research. Bi-grams networks contain word pairs that frequently appear in the data. Therefore, not all phrases directly reflect the focus of the study and must be considered with caution while out of context. These networks are displayed with arrows to indicate the phrases stated in the interviews and focus groups. The arrows point from the first word to the second, third, and sometimes fourth word in the network. Darker arrows indicate that the phrase occurred more frequently than other phrases. This study included bi-grams for culture, leadership, and empathy to demonstrate data linked to answering the research questions.

Culture. The bi-gram network showing data related to the interview responses about school culture provided key phrases to suggest a positive correspondence between the principal and the school culture. Several networks that stand out from the data are "absolutely incredible," "positive culture," "super compassionate," "amazing, fantastic, supportive," and "tight-knit family." Each network highlights positive phrases representing the participants' experiences with their school's culture. Figure 10 provides the complete list of the networks related to culture.

Figure 10

Bi-gram Network: School Culture



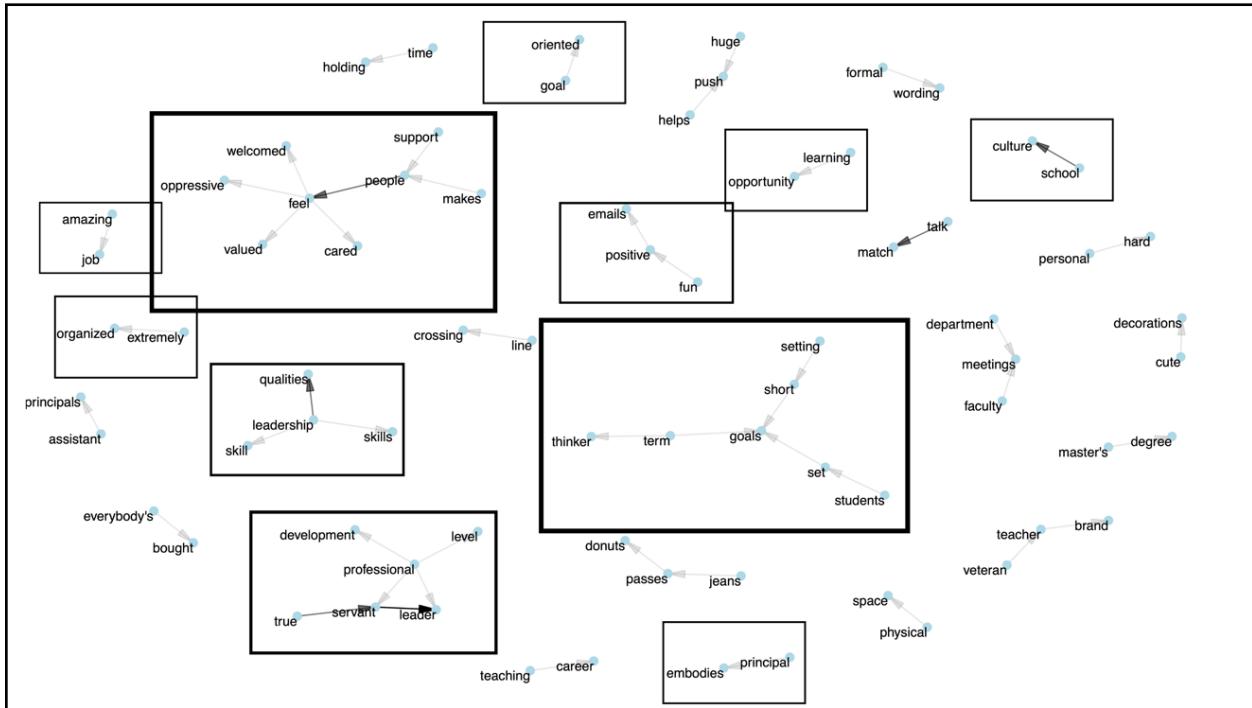
Note. Key phrases related to the research are indicated with boxes. Additional phrases were determined to be unrelated or parts of narratives that do not pertain to the research questions.

Leadership. The leadership bi-gram provided an overview of one-to-one interview responses related to the participant's leadership skills. Data suggested that participants stated

positive phrases when reflecting on their campus principals' leadership skills. Figure 11 represents the networked phrases by participants during one-to-one interviews.

Figure 11

Leadership Bi-gram

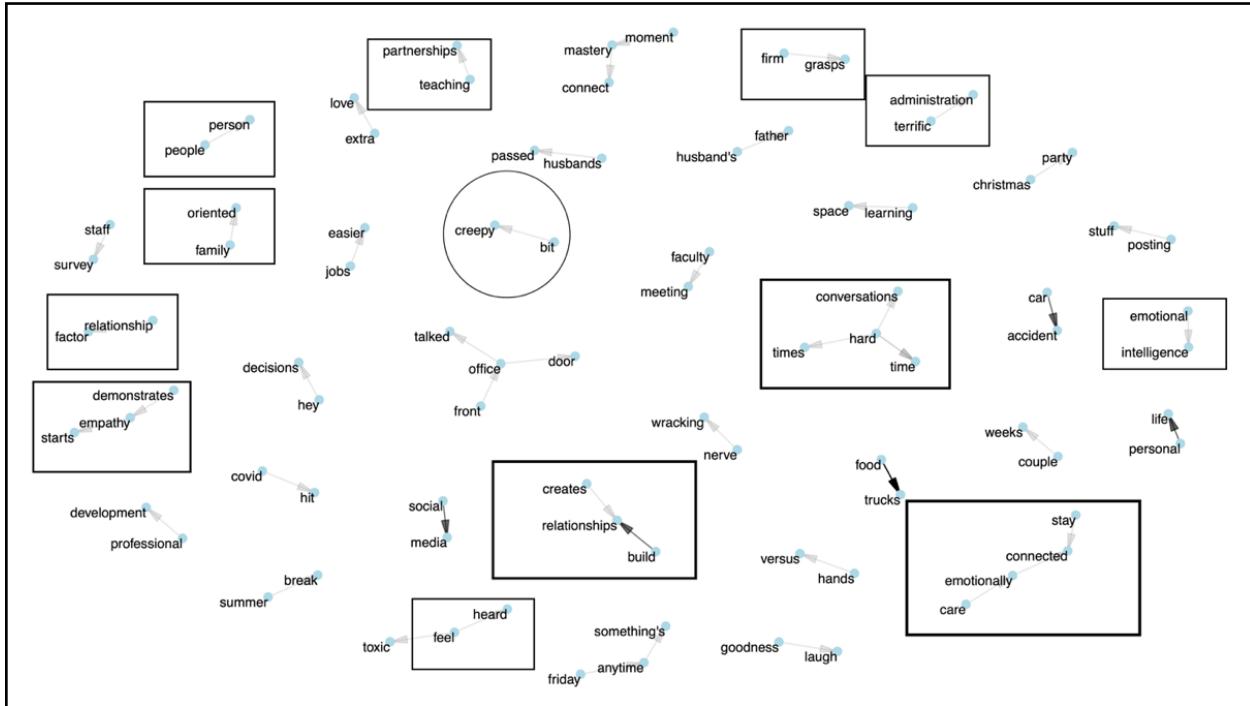


Note. Key phrases related to the research are indicated with boxes. Additional phrases were determined to be unrelated or parts of narratives that do not pertain to the research questions.

Empathy. Figure 12 provides bi-gram networks representing interview responses related to the principals' empathy. Empathy is considered a component of Goleman's emotional intelligence (1995). These data are significant to the study in that it directly links the perception of the school leader and emotional intelligence, as outlined in research question two.

Figure 12

Interview Bi-Gram Network: Empathy



Note. Key phrases related to the research are indicated with boxes. Additional phrases were determined to be unrelated or parts of narratives that do not pertain to the research questions.

These networks include phrases that align with the theme of empathy, as indicated in the study. The additional networks demonstrate portions of responses that, if taken out of context, could be seen as a negative response to the question posed. For example, the network "bit creepy," as indicated by a circle in Figure 12, was voiced by participant five when describing a positive observation that was made:

... that connection that he has with us is something that though just a name is such a small thing, he didn't have to know my husband, but he did before he even met him, which some people might think is a little bit creepy. I felt very endeared by that.

Therefore, this is an example regarding the caution required when interpreting bi-grams which should be considered in context and cross-referenced with participant responses to check for interpretive accuracy.

Bi-gram Summary. These bi-gram networks offer relevant analysis in connection with the data from the study. Firstly, these data representations indicated a strong argument for the existence of a positive culture. In addition, participants were favorable of their campus principals' leadership skills. Further, the connection to empathy links to the components of emotional intelligence. These results support answering the two research questions within this study.

Term Frequency and Inverse Document Frequency Bi-grams (TF-IDF). Text analysis is also capable of identifying phrases in the data that may not have occurred frequently but appear to hold a level of significance compared to other words or phrases using inverse frequency analysis. Furthermore, this allows the accounting for less used bi-grams that are still significant to the research. The identified networks are weighted higher (inversely) than more commonly used words to determine their importance and relevancy (Nguyen, 2014). This data analysis process is imperative to ensure that low-frequency statements of importance are taken into consideration as part of the entire data review.

Table 4 provides the results from a TF-IDF analysis of one-to-one interviews and the focus group data. The identified bi-gram networks were considered significant to the study regardless of their frequency.

Table 4

TF-IDF Analysis of Response Data

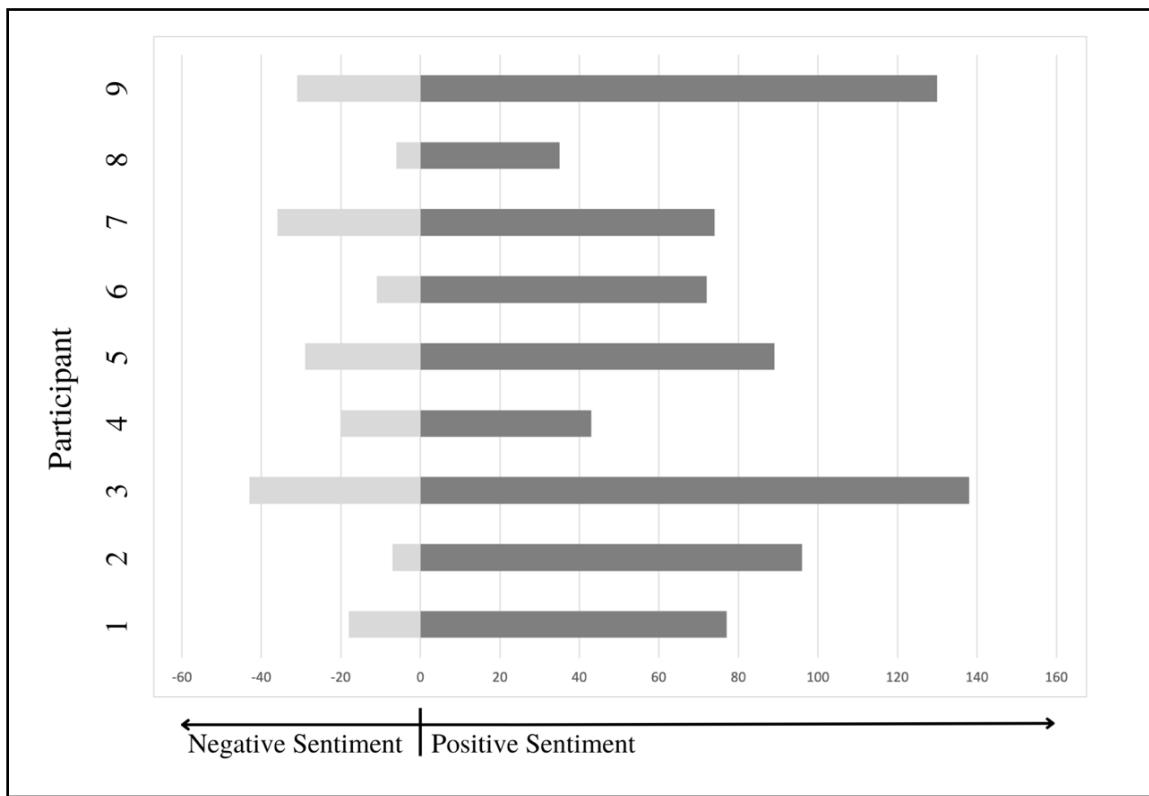
Bi-gram Network	Corresponding Question	Question Topic
building relationships	FG-Q1	social situations

Bi-gram Network	Corresponding Question	Question Topic
feel heard	FG-Q5	empathy
honest feedback	FG-Q5	empathy
super compassionate	SSI-Q1	culture
positive attitude	SSI-Q1	culture
fantastic supportive	SSI-Q1	culture
emotional intelligence	SSI-Q4	empathy
family oriented	SSI-Q4	empathy
demonstrates empathy	SSI-Q4	empathy
people person	SSI-Q4	empathy
servant leader	SSI-Q2	leadership skills
feel valued	SSI-Q2	leadership skills
feel welcomed	SSI-Q2	leadership skills
hard conversations	SSI-Q3	self-awareness
strong leadership	SSI-Q5	stressful situations
staying calm	SSI-Q5	stressful situations
level-headed	SSI-Q5	stressful situations

Note. Key: FG = Focus Group, SSI = Semi-Structured Interview, Q# = Question Number

While these phrases did not frequently appear in the data, the analysis concluded that their importance to the overall topic is significant. These data support a connection between positive school culture and principal leadership skills.

Sentiment. Word sentiment analysis provides positive (indicated by a positive number) and negative (indicated by a negative number) scores based on the emotionality of the analyzed text. The emotionality of the text in this study was determined using a pre-developed lexicon that scores each word as either positive or negative within *R* using the *tidytext* package. This study utilized the *NRC Word-Emotion Association Lexicon* (EmoLex) (Mohammad, 2011). When scored with EmoLex, the individual and overall sentiment scores were organized and reported visually. Figure 13 shows the combined sentiment score of all participants across one-to-one interviews and the focus group interview.

Figure 13*Combined Sentiment Score*

Note. These data are inclusive of both the one-to-one interviews and focus group responses.

Overall, Figure 13 shows a definitive skew indicating an overall positive sentiment portrayed by all participants during the study. The combined positive sentiment score was +754 compared to a total of -201 for negative sentiment. This analysis supported the conclusion that the participants portrayed positivity when discussing their school leaders. All sentiment score analyses can be found in Appendix E.

Coding Tables

Two coding tables were used to organize the data, one for each research question. Firstly, Figure 14, Data Sorted in Levels of Coding for Research Question One: How are teachers' perceptions of their school administrator's leadership performance aligned with their perceptions

of the school's culture? Next, Figure 15, Data Sorted in Levels of Coding for Research Question Two: In what ways are teachers' perceptions of the campus principal's leadership skills aligned with the components of emotional intelligence? These figures present the raw data and data sources along with each coding stage.

Figure 14

Data Sorted in Levels of Coding for Research Question One: How are teachers' perceptions of their school administrator's leadership performance aligned with their perceptions of the school's culture?

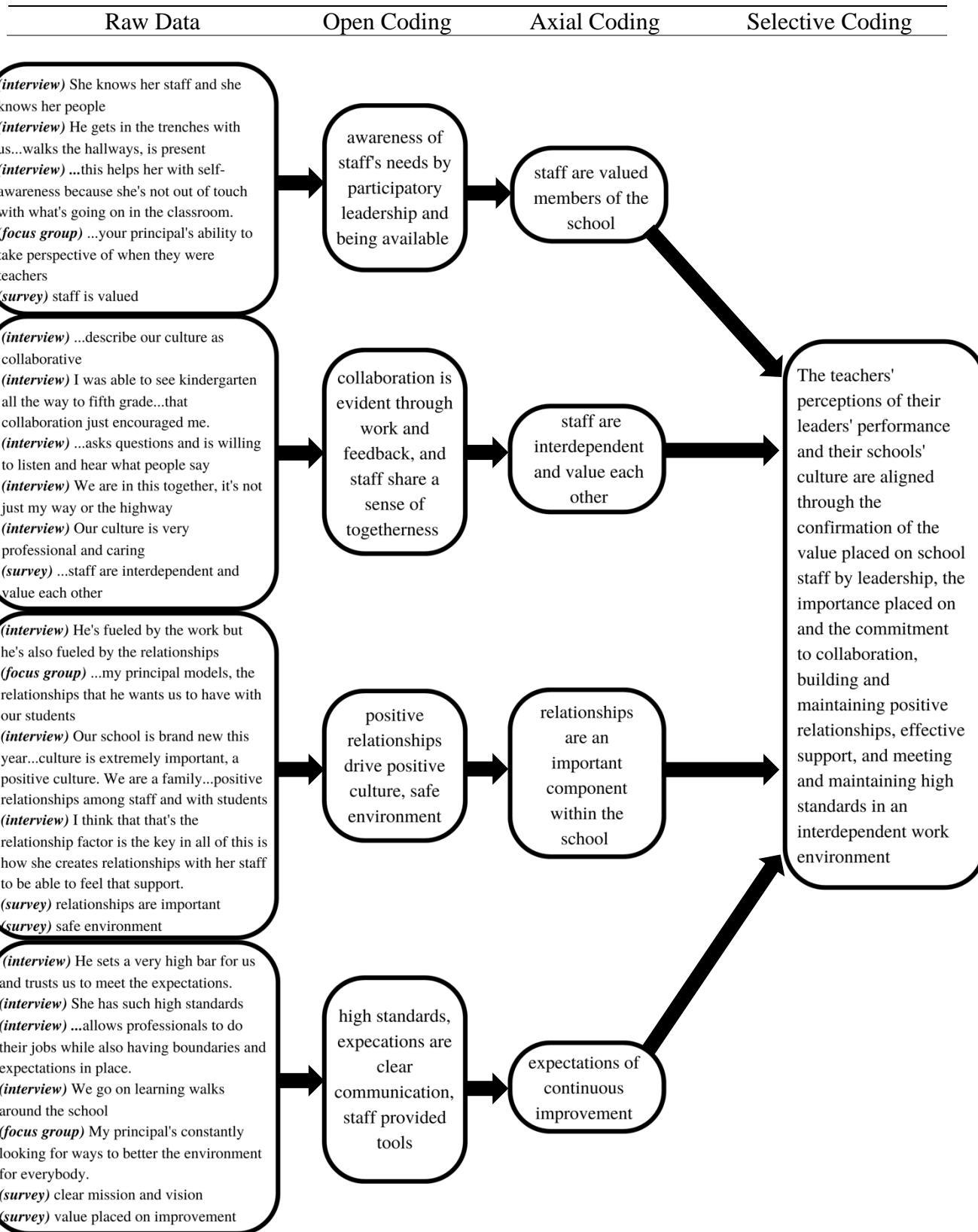
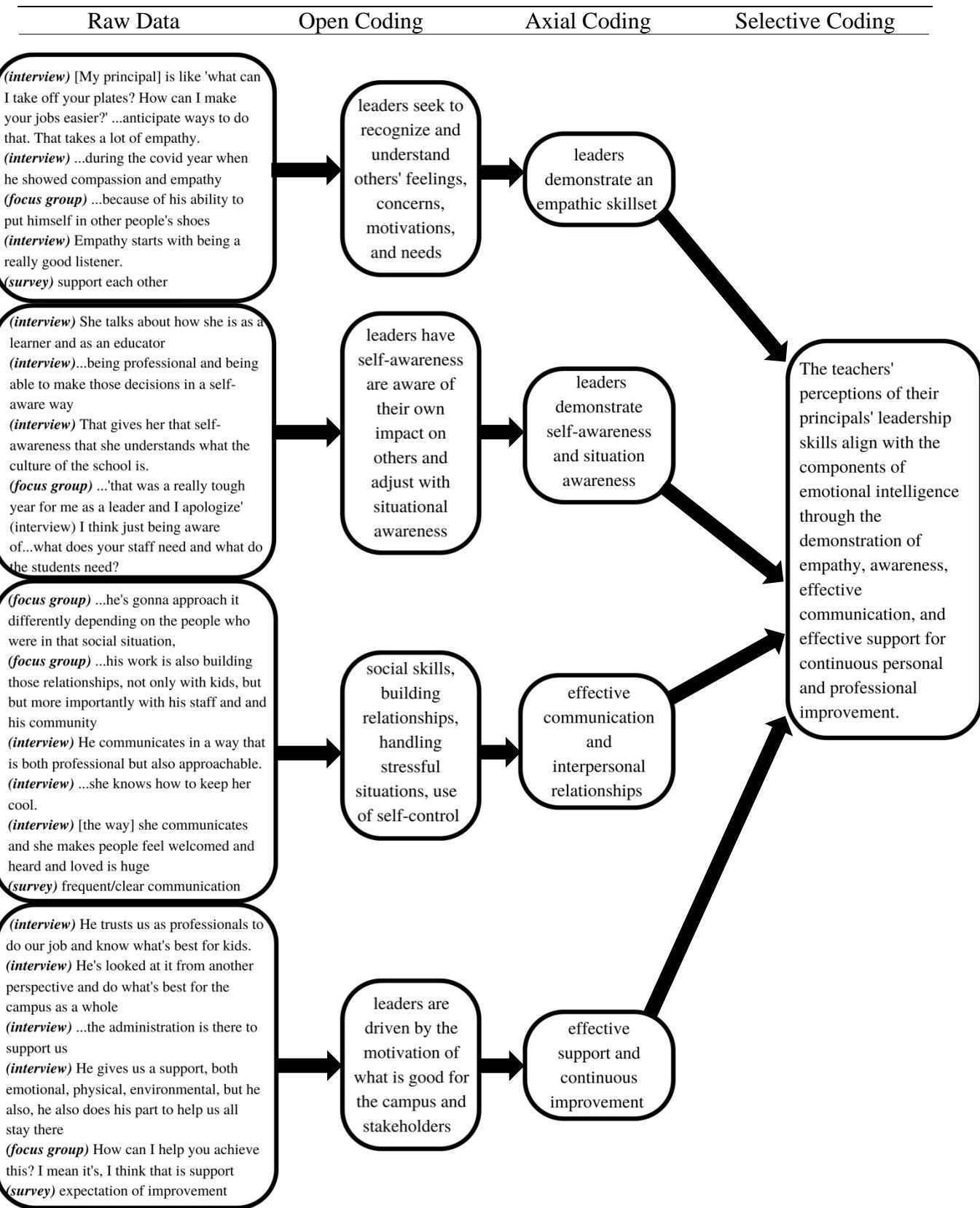


Figure 15

Data Sorted in Levels of Coding for Research Question Two: In what ways are teachers' perceptions of the campus principal's leadership skills aligned with the components of emotional intelligence?



Study Conclusions

This study was designed to answer the following research questions: 1. How are teachers' perceptions of their school administrator's leadership performance aligned with their perceptions of the school's culture? 2. In what ways are teachers' perceptions of the campus principal's leadership skills aligned with the components of emotional intelligence?

Question One

Teachers' perceptions of their school administrator's leadership performance and culture aligned positively with this study. The survey results indicated that participants strongly agreed or agreed 94.26% of the time across all related responses. Neutral responses represented 3.52%, and responses indicating disagreement or strong disagreement totaled 2.22% of all responses. These results indicated the existence of a positive school culture. Table 5 provides the interview results totals by answer choice.

Table 5

Survey Results Totals

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
4	8	19	133	376
(0.74%)	(1.48%)	(3.52%)	(24.63%)	(69.63%)

As recorded in the coding table, individual one-to-one and focus group responses, all indicating agreement or strong agreement on the survey, aligned with the original survey questions.

Similarly, the one-to-one interview responses indicated an overall positive sentiment score of +531 (79%) and a negative sentiment score of -140 (21%). The general sentiment score for the focus group responses indicated an overall positive sentiment score of +223 (79%) and a

negative sentiment score of -61 (21%). The consistency between the two scores demonstrated credibility in accurately representing the individual participant responses.

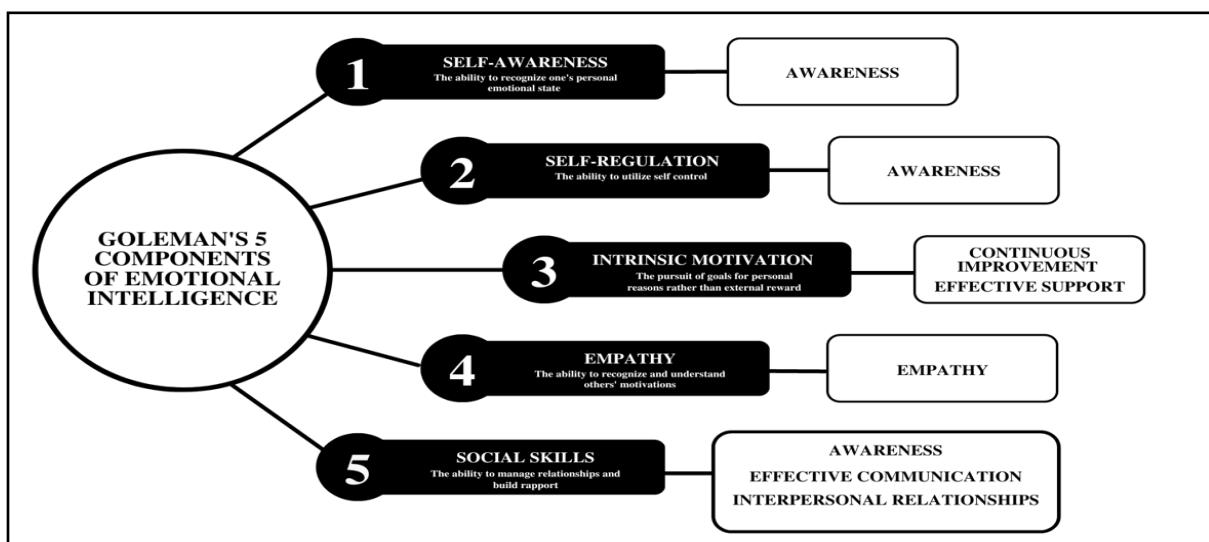
In conclusion, question one can be answered with the data showing that participants representing three campuses indicated a positive school culture and a positive sentiment related to their school's administrator's leadership performance.

Question Two

Teacher perceptions of their campus principal were first supported by the positive relationship between their leader and positive campus culture, as answered by question 1. Further evidence extrapolated during the qualitative coding process produced the following themes: awareness, continuous improvement, effective communication, effective support, empathy, and interpersonal relationships. Each of these themes for this study was directly connected with the components of emotional intelligence. These components include self-awareness, self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, empathy, and social skills. Figure 16 represents the alignment as indicated in the study data.

Figure 16

Goleman's Components of Emotional Intelligence and Study Theme Alignment



Note. Repeated themes resulted from data that aligned with more than one component of emotional intelligence.

The inductive coding process revealed several categories that appeared across different themes. Thus, the final alignment of themes to the emotional intelligence components showed some overlap. For example, the awareness theme within the study included responses related to self-awareness, self-control and an awareness of others' needs (social skills).

In conclusion, the study confirmed that teachers' perceptions of their leaders' skills aligned with emotional intelligence components. Thus, these findings suggested a relationship was found between the emotional intelligence of the campus leader and a positive rapport with school culture.

Trustworthiness Techniques

Qualitative analysis is a complex process requiring steps to ensure the study's trustworthiness. Rigor was established using four criteria (credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability) to verify the data's accuracy, applicability, consistency, and neutrality (Ary et al., 2017).

Member checks were used after the inductive coding process to check for accuracy regarding the intent of each participant. All nine one-to-one interview participants and all three focus group participants confirmed the interpretive accuracy of the coded data. Triangulation occurred using surveys, one-to-one interviews, and the focus group. Transferability was achieved through sufficiently thick and rich descriptors of the context of the study. Dependability was achieved using a clear audit trail documenting how the study was completed and the decisions made, and a peer reviewer was used to check for validity through consensus. Finally, confirmability was achieved by data triangulation using a peer reviewer and a reflexive journal.

Summary

This study aimed to demonstrate the alignment between teachers' perceptions of their campus culture and school leaders' skills and behaviors. In addition, those findings were compared to the components of emotional intelligence. Data were collected by conducting staff surveys at three schools, nine one-to-one interviews, and one focus group of three participants. The data were transcribed and analyzed through an inductive coding process that resulted in six main themes. The data were also analyzed utilizing open-source data mining software that produced bi-graph networks, sentiment scores, and inverse bi-graph scores. These analyses provided the information necessary to formulate the answers to the research questions.

The findings of this study indicated a positive association between teachers' perceptions of their principals' leadership skills and their perceptions of their school climate. Further, there is alignment between the data provided by the participants to suggest that the principals studied in this research possess skills in the components of emotional intelligence. The survey data indicated that teachers perceived a positive school culture at all three schools, and the perceptions of their campus principal's leadership performance aligned accordingly. Completing one-to-one interviews and the focus group discussion resulted in six themes derived from the raw data: awareness, continuous improvement, effective communication, support, empathy, and interpersonal relationships. These data provided the answer to the research questions posed in this study.

Chapter Five: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

This phenomenological qualitative study, rooted in Vygotsky's social learning theory, was conducted to identify potential alignment between perceptions of a positive school culture, campus principal leadership skills and behaviors, and emotional intelligence. Prior research in this area suggested that school principals directly impact their school's culture (Spicer, 2016). The emerging research attempted to uncover how a principal's social skills and emotional intelligence and explore his or her ability to lead and create a positive culture. Additional research through quantitative measures has identified a link between emotional intelligence and the impact on a school's climate (Al Shehhi et al., 2021). However, little research examines the personal perceptions of educators, those who benefit or are challenged by a principal's emotional intelligence.

Research Questions

The following two research questions guided the study:

Research question #1: How are teachers' perceptions of their school administrator's leadership performance aligned with their perceptions of the school's culture?

Research question #2: In what ways are teachers' perceptions of the campus principal's leadership skills aligned with the components of emotional intelligence?

Significance of Theoretical Framework

Social learning theories support understanding how individuals learn within social contexts (Mcleod, 2022). Vygotsky (1978) believed that community plays a major role in the learning process and that social interaction is paramount to the learning process. Further, Vygotsky's work has been central to the ongoing research that suggests emotion is also key to learning and development (Cong-Lem, 2022). As this research continues to develop, the link

between the social implications on school culture is evident. Shafer (2018) stated that "a culture will be strong or weak depending on the interactions between people in the organization" (para. 4). Research showed that a positive school culture, which is driven by social interactions and frameworks that define collective understandings and beliefs, is a critical component of success (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2005). This research study confirmed the impact of social learning through experiences and social interaction, a theme that is foundational to Vygotsky's work.

The research questions were addressed considering data from 54 survey responses, nine semi-structured interviews, and one focus group. All interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed using TEMI, an online transcription service. Data were reduced through an inductive coding process and organized in charts that included open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

Conclusions and Summary of Findings

This study explored teachers' perceptions of their schools' culture, principals' leadership skills and behaviors, and the connections these perceptions have to the basic foundations of emotional intelligence. Each research question provided an opportunity to gain an understanding of teacher perception for defining relationships between leaders and emotional intelligence. One survey questionnaire, nine semi-structured interviews, and one focus group with three participants were used to gather the data for this study.

The teachers' perceptions included six themes: awareness, continuous improvement, effective communication, support, empathy, and interpersonal relationships. These themes were developed from the data that provided insight into each participant's experiences with the school's culture and their perceptions of their schools' principals based on observations and daily

interactions. Participants were asked to reflect on their experiences and provide feedback regarding current perceptions and beliefs about their respective schools.

Themes

The data analysis resulted in themes deduced from open and axial coding through an inductive coding procedure. The themes were developed based on the raw data with no preconceived ideas or beliefs. Overall, the participants' responses were represented by 27 categories that were further reduced into the six central themes of the study.

Awareness. The theme of awareness was developed through raw data reported by individuals concluding that their leaders were aware of themselves and their impact on others, as well as being aware of the experiences and needs of others. The theme elaborated on identifying specific circumstances or scenarios that drive situational awareness. Participants reported their principals as being connected to the daily activities within the school by being visible, involved, and actively engaged, which led to their awareness of current happenings within the school. Participants described that their principals made concerted efforts to check in with staff, listen to feedback, and adjust decisions or plans based on available information. Teachers also reported efforts of principals to be aware of circumstances outside of the building that can impact the school's daily operations. These were reported to be major events or issues in public schools, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, or individual positive or negative circumstances that may impact smaller numbers of people, such as illness or personal celebrations. Ultimately, it was reported that principals who are aware could adapt to the changing needs of the school community. Although these perceptions encompassed additional favorable applications, they are aligned with Goleman's suggestion that self-awareness is a critical component of emotional intelligence.

Continuous Improvement. Study participants provided data on their knowledge and understanding of their principals' commitment to, and expectation of, continuous improvement efforts. The concept of continuous improvement was supported by the data from participants suggesting that their principals communicated high standards and expectations for their staff and students. Coupled with this was the experience of participants engaged in ongoing improvement efforts driven by their principals to increase student success ultimately. These efforts included ongoing personal and professional development and the reflection of practiced and practical evolution based on staff and student needs.

Further, survey results concluded that 87.04% of participants strongly agreed that there is a sense of value placed on and an expectation of continuous improvement at their respective schools. Additionally, individuals reported that their principals were self-motivated and passionate about their work. This theme can be connected to intrinsic motivation, one of Goleman's components of emotional intelligence. Goleman (1995) concluded that emotionally intelligent individuals were self-motivated and possessed an innate desire to excel in their commitments. Focus group data revealed that the principals in this study relied on their passion and desire to achieve motivation.

Effective Communication. The data in this study showed significant deference to communication as an important principal trait. The survey results reported that 94.44% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement regarding frequent clear communication that supports their ability to do their jobs. Further analysis of interviews and the focus group suggested that communication is vital to relationship building and awareness. These data are aligned with the social component of emotional intelligence as researched by Goleman (1995). The presence of interpersonal social skills impacts one's ability to communicate to build

meaningful relationships (McKenna, 2022) effectively. Leaders can establish expectations and build the capacity of their followers by strengthening relationships (Murphy & Louis, 2018).

Effective Support. The results of this study included the importance of effective support as a key indicator of leadership that supports the development and sustainment of a positive school culture. The study participants provided statements referring to the level of support they received from their respective administrators in the form of availability, situational awareness, and listening to feedback. Teacher job satisfaction, a driving force in school culture, is consistently associated with principal support (Olsen & Huang, 2019; Ertürk, 2021). The data further indicated that expectations of collaboration and support from colleagues were tied to the effective support structures initiated by the campus principal. The survey results stipulated that 94.45% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that their campus works together to support each other and to find solutions to challenges. Finally, the study participants connected their principals' passion for education and desire to lead as a driving force to the levels of support that is provided to staff. The data linked relationships between intrinsic motivation and continuous improvement.

Empathy. While not named explicitly or frequently in the data, the constructs of empathy were evident throughout the results. This theme was developed through the responses of individuals that identified awareness, compassion, and understanding as key factors in their principals' ability to show empathy. Empathy can be applied across most themes in this study, given that it is deeply connected to relationships and social skills. Respondents reported active listening, availability, and awareness across data sets. All of which are related to empathic leadership (Lynch, 2019). Goleman (1995) listed empathy as a component of emotional

intelligence in his research. The connection between interpersonal relationships and knowing and understanding the experiences and needs of others was evident in this study.

Interpersonal Relationships. It has often been demonstrated that developing interpersonal relationships through personal social skills and emotional intelligence is key to success in educational leadership (Houston, 2019). Recognition, trust, connection, and emotional intelligence were all terms mentioned by study participants when reflecting on their respective leaders. Ninety-six percent of survey respondents in this study agreed or strongly agreed that their principal keenly emphasized relationship building at their campuses. The foundation of a positive school culture is the development and sustainment of trusting relationships (Moses, 2019). Participants provided positive feedback regarding their campus principals' ability to foster relationships and model the expectations of relationships for the campus. This theme is aligned with Goleman's (1995) work, given the association between social skills and relationship development.

The study results suggested that teachers' perceptions of their school administrator's leadership performance are aligned with their perceptions of school culture, as confirmed by survey results, one-to-one interviews, and focus group responses. This study further confirmed a deeper association between positive school culture, school leaders' skills and behaviors, and emotional intelligence. Additionally, data mining analysis provided confirmation and credibility to the study using sentiment scoring, bi-gram networks, and inverse bi-gram networks. The data analysis yielded six central themes: awareness, continuous improvement, effective communication, support, empathy, and interpersonal relationships. These favorable results, when compiled and coded, provided a clear connection as sought in the research questions.

Limitations

Qualitative research aims to provide a complete and detailed description of the gathered data to answer the posed research questions through interpretation and ethnography (Atieno, 2009). No matter how well a research study is conducted and reported, all studies have limitations (Moura, 2017). Despite the limitations, qualitative studies are most useful when the purpose of the study, its design, and its results are described in detail (Crescentini, 2009).

A limitation of this study was the timeframe. The amount of time available to conduct the research was limited due to the nature of the availability of the participants and the study guidelines. If allotted more time, additional research regarding the connections made through the coding process could have been explored. The coding results could have been strengthened by demonstrating cause-and-effect relationships between the data collected and the established perceived themes.

Additionally, the sample size in this research was a limitation. A larger quantity sample size and a wider range of different schools or school districts could have enhanced the transferability and reliability of the data. Using other schools, a larger survey audience, and additional study participants could have enriched the data to extrapolate more themes. Further, the data mining text analysis was limited due to the sample size. In text mining, the more data to mine, the more potent the results. This research approach was developed to strengthen and simplify the analysis of large quantities of text data (Stedman, 2020).

Finally, a limitation of this study was the lack of convenient personal communication. Given the size of the school district and the availability of the participants, the data were gathered by electronic means (online survey and interviews that were conducted via video conference). While the use of technology to communicate and research is increasing, conducting

this study in person could have enhanced the understanding of the participant's behavior, non-verbal communication, and the overall creation of a natural context for the study (Bohigas, 2020).

Delimitations

Qualitative research consists of researcher-influenced boundaries within the study that are referred to as delimitations. These boundaries are designed to maintain a manageable and relevant study (Miles, 2019). A delimitation in this study was the decision to narrow the participant field to only include current practicing teachers who are professionally licensed. This decision was made to maintain consistency regarding the scope of the participants' experiences through teaching. Considering feedback from additional staff in different roles could have skewed the data regarding the relationship between a teacher and their principal.

Study Implications

This study suggested a link between a positive school culture with the campus principal's leadership skills and emotional intelligence. There are always ways to improve public schools to ultimately experience high levels of success and positive outcomes for students. Leveraging new learning about how solid leadership through increased emotional intelligence could support school improvement.

The implications for practice resulting from this study include using curriculum and training supports throughout educational administrative master's programs. While learning about becoming a school leader, an emphasis on relationships and school culture could result in leaders who are more prepared to lead with emotional intelligence. These skills may produce opportunities to create a learning environment that is safe, welcoming, and focused on learning in the academic, social, and emotional arenas.

Additionally, the use of hiring practices related to the components of emotional intelligence may benefit a school district in hiring teachers and administrators who are prepared to meet the needs of their students and foster interpersonal relationships with their colleagues and communities. Screening candidates for emotional intelligence traits through quality questioning throughout the interview process will aid school leaders in making high-value hires to support a healthy and positive school culture. Further, the ability to model emotional intelligence for students may directly impact their social and emotional development.

Finally, the implications for ongoing research and applicable professional learning for educators may support improved skill sets in the classroom leading to successful outcomes for students. As teachers and administrators seek to create a positive school culture, there are implications for classroom implementation of practices that embody those attributes. The culture of a school is evident throughout all spaces and is the responsibility of all stakeholders. Ongoing professional learning targeting the increased understanding and skillset related to emotional intelligence could support healthier classroom environments that foster a consistent culture across the school setting.

Recommendations

Leadership in any field is challenging. Educational leadership is an area that has seen a great deal of complexity and challenges (Leithwood et al., 2004; Lunenburg, 2011). As leaders continue to learn and adapt, a true constant that remains to be one of the most important aspects of leader success is emotional intelligence (Landry, 2019). The research on the impact of emotional intelligence through teacher and administrator preparatory programs on social-emotional learning and the impact on student success should continue to be developed and applied.

Teacher retention is a current issue that schools are facing every year. It is estimated that more than 44% of new teachers leave the profession within five years (Cineas, 2022). Further, poll data suggested that veteran teachers are burned out and considering leaving the profession (Marken & Agrawal, 2022). Given this challenge, a recommendation for future research involves the understanding of how a leader's emotional intelligence impacts teacher retention. The possible relationship in this study could shed light on addressing the issues of high turnover rates and increasing retention rates from year to year. As demonstrated in this study, emotional intelligence and school culture are significantly related. One possible next step would be determining a leader's emotional intelligence score compared to that leader's retention rates. The positive and negative correlations may explicate an important area of personal and professional learning for school leaders.

Further research could also develop a stronger link between a leader's and teacher's emotional intelligence and student achievement. It is well-documented that a positive school culture is correlated to increased student success (Bayer, 2021; Lee, 2019). The factors include better interpersonal relationships with students and families, increased parental participation, shared goals between school and community related to achievement, and reduced anxiety or fear within an environment that feels safe (Thapa et al., 2013). These factors could be expanded to understand better how emotional intelligence plays a role in student success.

Summary

Learning is a social process that is influenced by interactions with others. Understanding emotional intelligence related to leadership can support improved relationships, communication, and overall job satisfaction. Fostering these relationships as a school leader sets a demonstrated expectation of how others should be treated and how the work is to be addressed daily. A

positive school culture is rooted in shared ownership, trust, respect, and communication.

Considering the challenges facing public educators, increasing one's awareness, continuous improvement, effective communication, effective support, empathy, and interpersonal relationships are important factors to consider as a school leader. Ultimately, leading with emotional intelligence may frame a successful roadmap to developing a positive school culture that could lead to the pinnacle of the purpose of public education: student success.

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Zhao/

Appendices

Appendix A
Survey

Demographic Information:

1. How many years have you been teaching with a valid teaching certificate?
2. How many years have you taught at your current school?
3. What is your highest educational degree?

1. The current campus has a clear, shared goal and vision.					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
2. There is a sense of value placed on and an expectation of continuous improvement.					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
3. Staff is valued as members of the school.					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
4. The campus is a safe environment that is conducive to teaching and learning.					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
5. Staff enjoy their jobs and look forward to coming to work each day.					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
6. Staff is interdependent and value each other.					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
7. Relationships are an important component within the school.					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
8. There is a sense of community within the school.					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
9. Staff is provided with frequent clear communication that supports my ability to do my job well.					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
10. When there are concerns or challenges, members the campus work together to support each other and to find solutions.					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A

Appendix B
One-to-One Interview Questions

One-to-One Interview Questions

1. How would you describe your school's culture?
2. What leadership skills are the strongest for your principal?
3. In what ways does your principal demonstrate self-awareness?
4. How does your principal demonstrate empathy?
5. What does your principal do in stressful situations and responding to escalated individuals?

Appendix C

Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Questions

1. What skills do you notice that support your principal's ability to manage social situations?
2. Do you believe that your principal is self-motivated and is fueled by the work he or she is doing? How so?
3. What do you notice your principal doing in response to situations that require a great deal of self-regulation?
4. What is your perception of your principal's self-awareness and humility?
5. Describe your principal's ability to put him/herself in others' shoes and in attempts to respond to the feelings of others.

Appendix D

Informed Consent

Qualitative Research Study- Informed Consent Form

Title of the research study:

Leading with Emotional Intelligence: How Campus Leadership Skills Impact School Culture.

Please read this consent document carefully before participating in this study. This research has been approved by the Carson-Newman University Institutional Review and Frisco Independent School District.

Purpose of the research study:

The research study aims to obtain information concerning Leading with Emotional Intelligence: How Campus Leadership Skills Impact School Culture. Emerging themes from the resulting data will be analyzed and reported.

Steps of the study process:

You will be asked ten questions from a survey regarding school culture and leadership. Three additional questions will be asked regarding your teaching experience and the highest degree earned.

Following the survey questions, some individuals will be selected to participate in 1:1 interviews. The interview will consist of five open-ended questions regarding school culture and your perceptions of campus leadership skills. This interview will be recorded and transcribed for data analysis purposes.

Finally, a small focus group will be selected to discuss five open-ended questions. Once again, the discussion will be recorded and transcribed for data analysis.

After the interviews and focus groups, you may be asked to clarify some of the information you provided. Your responses will provide the basis for the action portion of the study.

Risk:

We anticipate no risk to you by participating in this study.

Privacy Information:

Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. This information will be assigned a code number or pseudonym. Data has been analyzed, and when the study is completed, your name will not be used in any report, and all information will be destroyed.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

Right of the Research Study:

Participants of this study will have the right to withdraw from the study without consequences and at any time.

Questions:

If you want to contact me for more information, my email address is gmjackson1338@cn.edu. The chair of this study may also be contacted: Dr. Tammy Barnes, Associate Professor of Education, Carson-Newman University, tbarnes@cn.edu.

Agreement:

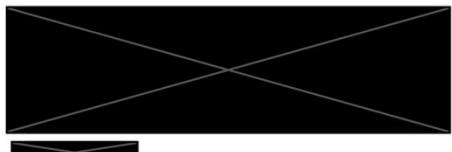
I have read the procedure described above. I agree to participate in the study voluntarily and have received a copy of this informed consent.

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix E

District Approval Letter



Director of Accountability and Assessment

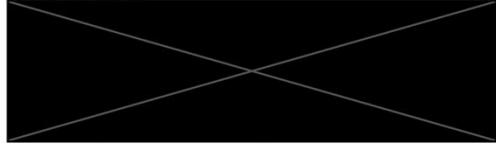
November 11, 2022

To whom it may concern,

[REDACTED] has reviewed the nature and scope of the research study proposed by Garrett Jackson on the topic "perceptions of school culture and principal leadership skills." The research review committee has determined that the scope of this research will be permissible within [REDACTED] as outlined in the proposal submission. Additionally, the district could find value in the research outcomes.

Should the research team have additional questions, please feel free to contact my direct line at [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,



Managing Director of Assessment and Accountability

